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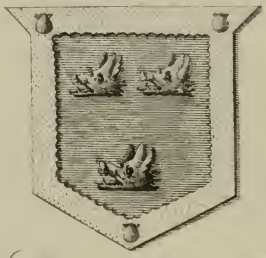

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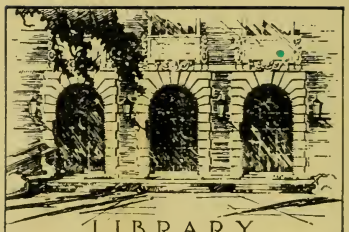

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MY UNCLE THE CURATE

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE BACHELOR OF THE ALBANY" AND "THE FALCON FAMILY."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

CHAPMAN AND HALL, 186, STRAND.

MDCCCXLIX.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

BOOK I.

Reader. "Pr'ythee, good author, no humdrum commencement now; something dramatic—startling—new—or, at least, not *very* old."

Author. "I think I shall hit your fancy. 'It was a fine October morning, and a solitary horseman was seen slowly pacing up a hill—' "

Reader. "Oh!—oh!—oh!—that dreadful morning—that eternal horseman—that everlasting hill!"

Author. "Well, what do you say to two horseman, and an inn-door; one of the

horsemen masked; time night; the moon in the last quarter."

Reader. "Off, off, off, horsemen and moon both,—that moon has been in the last quarter since the Great Cyrus was written."

Author. "The fire blazed on the hearth; an old couple basked in the kindly light; a kitten sported with a terrier on the rug; the table was covered with wine and biscuits."

Reader. "*Mi pardonate*, gentle master, do not a ton of novels at least commence with wine and biscuits?"

Author. "You may have walnuts, if you please, and I would undertake to provide nut-crackers. Any thing in reason. I have an account with the fairies' cutler, and a pair of nut-crackers is neither here nor there."

Reader. "Pray do let us have a new beginning,—is the request so very unreasonable?"

Author. "The most unreasonable request in the world; if your ladyship were a *writer*

of fiction, you would know how hard it is to turn up any thing new."

Reader. "Being a *reader* of fiction, that is a truth I don't want the writers of it to tell me."

Author. "Then ought you to be the more charitable. Time was when readers were gentle in truth, now they are only gentle by courtesy,—the fairest of you are unfair,—no allowance for an author's difficulties; no gracious oversight of his little short-comings; and then, like the Athenians of old, you keep always calling for something new, as if a writer's brain was like the shop of a Parisian *modiste*."

Reader. "Very monstrous indeed!—to expect something new in a novel!"

Author. "Now, suppose the novel were an Irish one, to have nothing novel in it would be quite in character."

Reader. "Well, there has been enough of this idle parley. It is better to get into the house in any way, than to be left in this unceremonious fashion standing at the door."

Author. "The door is open, madam.—I am sincerely distressed it is *not* a new one, to please you."

Reader. "A distressed author is nothing new, at all events."

Author. "As old at least as the scene to which I am going to introduce you—the old hall of an old college; an old table with old books on it."

Reader. "Old, old, old, all old indeed."

Author. "Not all, there is a young man at the old table, and now that I see the dawn of a smile, madam, on your lips at the mention of the young man, I accept the omen, and respectfully touching your white hand, usher you into my—book."

CHAPTER I.

CAMBRIDGE.

It was the beginning of the long vacation of 183—, the universities were growing deserted; students were trooping home to the

country-houses of their fathers and uncles; the classical antiquary was preparing to sail for Egypt and Asia Minor; the professors of botany and geology were studying the hand-books to Switzerland; and numbers of grave bachelors and graver doctors in black coats and gray were getting their fishing-tackle in order, and poring over old Izaac and Sir Humphry Davy, preparatory to an indolent tour in Wales, or the Scotch Highlands.

But there are always a few men who linger behind in the long days, as if to keep the lights of science from going quite out, or haply, like culinary vestals, to guard the kitchen-fires from extinction. One is too ambitious of academic success to squander a summer roving or fly-fishing; another loves, but cannot afford to travel; a third would go home if he had only a home to go to; and a fourth (as there are drones in every hive), is perhaps too sedentary, too lazy, or too corpulent, to think of locomotion with the sun in Leo or Virgo.

The quadrangle of —— Hall, Cambridge,

looked particularly desolate and gloomy—all the birds, in fact, had flown but three. One of these—the only one interesting to us—was Frank Vivyan, a young man of good family, handsome person, considerable talents, and very little else to depend upon for advancement and success in life. Vivyan had made up his mind to pass this his first vacation in the monastic repose and almost solitude of his hall. It was not a matter of inexorable necessity, nor yet, on the other hand, absolutely voluntary ;—at least, not a deliberate choice. His purse, though not full, was not quite empty. His pursuits did not enjoin the sacrifice of health to business. The fact was that he only tarried behind his fellow-scholars, because he did not well know where he could enjoy himself more than at Cambridge, having no father's house to harbour him, no invitation elsewhere that he cared to accept, little fancy to wander alone, and no friend to propose to join him in a ramble.

The day was warm, but not sultry, and Vivyan was sitting, or more properly loung-

ing, in a chair too capacious for his size, and too luxurious for his standing, at a small, but very solid, table, close to a tall, narrow window, with an infinity of minute panes. The window stood wide open to admit the genial sunshine and the delicate air. A man is known not better by his companionships than by the arrangements and aspect of his chambers. The disorder of Vivyan's was not inelegant or vulgar, but still it was disorder ; there was a negligence that denoted the indolent, or at least the erratic, student ; it looked as if there had been a battle of the books, and the papers had the appearance of having been blown about like the leaves in the Sibylline grotto. There were places for books and papers, but nothing was exactly in its place. An open piano was strewed with French mathematics, easily known by their blue and pink *robe de chambre*. The floor adjacent was encumbered with a chaos of loose music. A deep, comfortable sofa seemed to be used as a general repository for articles of all sorts, useful and useless, necessi-

ties and luxuries, hats, canes, brushes, pamphlets, boxes, umbrellas, and cigars. All looked careless and desultory, a study in a state of siege. The table was a wilderness of writing-materials, pen, ink, paper, envelopes, sealing-wax, seals with antique devices dispersed in all directions, like people in a panic ; the books were so multifarious as to afford no grounds for concluding, with any confidence, what branch of study was most in cultivation, or what profession, if any, was the student's aim. There were books of mathematics, history, metaphysics, poetry, politics, a work on geology, and a volume of "Quentin Durward." You could scarcely decide what was the young man's immediate pursuit. A volume of Hobbes was open before him, but other books were open too; Claudian, Shelley, and a treatise of "Conic Sections." He was reading none of the three, but seemingly watching the swallows as they darted across the window.

He was not an idler ; only a literary truant. Mental refinement was written on

his brow; it spoke in his eye, but the intellect was of an unfixed and airy character. A sheet of paper that lay there amongst the other straggling leaves let you fully into the story of his mind. It was covered with a maze of characters and hieroglyphics, algebraic symbols, Greek verses, geometrical lines, and lines of English poetry, the exactest possible type of the state of intellectual vagrancy.

A picture stands on the mantel-piece; a green curtain covers it,—let us draw it aside, —ah!—what a face! what supreme beauty! A face that Raphael might have painted. And how like it is to Vivyan! We have said that he was handsome; he must have been so, indeed, to have resembled that lovely portrait. If his features had a fault, it was owing to their resembling their exquisite original only too closely—the style was too delicate and feminine. But then his youth was some excuse; at least it was a fair apology for the smoothness of his upper lip, which was only beginning to be

shadowed by the promise of a moustache. His hair was fair, and where its thick clusters were parted with "artless heed" in front, they displayed a forehead of brilliant whiteness, and the most intellectual form. His eye was blue, mild, bright, but with something of dreaminess, or languor, in its very brilliancy. It was, however, not the languor of sensuality; nor was that the character of his mouth either, although it was still further, perhaps, from indicating the energetic and heroic qualities. Upon the whole a physiognomist of no very great acuteness might have divined what was indeed the truth, that Frank Vivyan was a young man of great attractions and brilliant parts, but deficient in the hardier qualities of perseverance and self-reliance, which so frequently conduct minor talents to eminence, while great abilities, unstrengthened and unsustained by them, are often destined to shame their possessors and disappoint the world. If Vivyan escaped these dangers, it was owing to the force of circumstances.

Had he been left to be the architect of his own fortune, it is probable the fabric would never have been raised.

Vivyan was the younger of two brothers; he had lost his mother early, and his father (an imprudent man) some years previous to the present period. You will easily believe that in point of fortune he was no Crœsus; his havings in money, like "his havings in beard," were a "younger brother's portion." A small Irish property, yielding something under two hundred a year, had descended to him from the maternal side,—a revenue sufficient, with sharp economy, to maintain him in the position of a gentleman, but totally insufficient to support the expense of the least costly form of university education. For this advantage, therefore, Frank was necessarily a dependent upon friendly aid. It was not from his brother, however, he received it: his brother, Sir Godfrey Vivyan, was a selfish and dissipated man, who, having inherited his father's extravagance along with his estate, found his available

income much too limited to supply his own frivolous or licentious pleasures. The benefactor of Vivyan was a distant relative, a wealthy merchant, resident in the south of Spain, whom the young man had never so much as seen. It was, of course, therefore, no feeling of personal affection or esteem that stimulated the munificence of this gentleman. Its origin was of a more tender, indeed of a romantic nature. In his youth he had formed a passionate attachment to Vivyan's mother; inexorable circumstances had not only prevented their union, but united the lady to another; time passed away, and with it the first bitterness of blasted prospects; but what can "raze out the written troubles" of the heart,—"pluck from the memory the rooted sorrow" of frustrated love and hope blighted? The rapturous fascination of Mr. Everard's youth continued to be the tranquil charm and innocent solace of his old age. Having heard by report how strongly Frank resembled his mother, and that he had been left but poorly provided

for, Mr. Everard was irresistibly impelled to promote his advancement in the only way that seemed open to him; and he proceeded to the attainment of his object with a delicacy and frankness that left the young man no alternative but to accept the kindness ingenuously, or inflict an ungracious wound through a mistaken feeling of independence.

Vivyan had a cousin, named George Markham, four or five years his senior, generous, brave, cordial, and manly, heir to a handsome fortune, and already in the enjoyment of so large an allowance as to place all the pleasures that became a gentleman liberally and lawfully within his reach. Virtuously more than intellectually educated, his tastes were happily innocent and healthy,

> "——— not of the courtly train,
> Or city's practice, but the country's innocence;"

he was passionately fond of rural sports, indeed of rural life in every respect, and spent the greater part of every year at his father's seat, a place called Manor Oakham,

in the neighbourhood of Southampton, except when he went to Scotland in the grouse season, made a pedestrian tour through the Alps or Pyrenees, or even ranged the world as far as the banks of the Jordan, and the cataracts of the Nile. He was an ardent lover of natural beauty, as most sportsmen are, particularly anglers, and Markham was as renowned with the rod as the gun;—indeed, the books he was most addicted to, if not the only ones to which he had ever paid much attention, were old Izaak and his fly-book.

Vivyan had not seen or known much of this relation of his until some short time after he was established at Cambridge. An accidental circumstance then brought Markham to that part of England, and he did not omit paying his fair cousin a visit. Nobody was so winsome as Frank Vivyan; he was all openness, benevolence, gentleness, courtesy, and good-humour. Markham was charmed with him: he perceived his mental superiority, but the perfect artlessness and

modesty, nay the very supineness, of Vivyan's character, prevented that superiority from being disagreeably felt by any body, even by those who were in the position of his intellectual rivals, which was not the case at all with Markham. Frank upon his part was an easy conquest. He gave his cousin his affections almost in the first hour of their acquaintance; and embraced his invitation to Southampton without one thought of Legendre, or Mr. Peters his tutor.

The life to which his cousin introduced him was delightfully idle. All the forms and varieties that ease and idlesse ever took in a country-house were at Vivyan's disposal from cock-crow to sunset. There was not a work on mathematics in the library to remind him of his deserted studies, or a grave academic face at the table to recall the image of Mr. Peters.

Markham was not motherless; but his mother, an eccentric woman of fashion, lived entirely between London and Paris; and his father, also an oddity, and an invalid to boot,

was drenching himself abroad with all the waters of Germany. The house was thus abandoned to youth, and pleasure, which is youth's business. Vivyan's modes of enjoyment, however, differed in many respects from his cousin's. Markham was active and athletic, full of animal spirits, as eager at every thing he engaged in as if his life and fortune were staked on it, habitually an early riser, a man to catch the larks asleep in their nest, and to make chanticleer crow if he neglected his duty. Vivyan, on the contrary, was addicted a little to his couch. He had probably, like most of us, witnessed in his time many more sunsets than sunrises. It is only metaphorically that men in general are much given to worship the rising sun.

At Manor Oakham, Vivyan scarce knew how the time passed, only that it passed agreeably; it was like dreaming;—or imagine swimming without an effort down a bright stream that flows over sparkling pebbles, between banks of flowers. Markham adapted

himself to his friend's tastes and strength ; he shortened his rides and moderated his walks to suit him. For the first time in his life he became something of a saunterer, and it cost him some trouble to become one ; he was so used to rapid and energetic movements. But he always took his gun with him. Frank, too, carried a light fowling-piece for a few days, but he found the encumbrance greater than the amusement it afforded ; he loved loitering in the woods for the mere love of the woods and the loitering; and he was no great shot either, just enough to frighten a pheasant now and then, or hit a hare couchant. His sportsmanlike essays made Markham and his company smile, but when they smiled, Vivyan himself laughed, and made livelier hits at his own misses than they did. It is only affectation that is ever ridiculous ; and Frank, far from affecting to be a shot, did not even assume the garb and externals of a sportsman.

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATIONS FOR A "VOYAGE PITTORESQUE."

"'Tis a rare fortune, but of inestimable solace, to have a worthy man, one of a sound judgment, and of a temper conformable to your own, who takes a delight to bear your company in your travels. I have been at a very great loss for one in mine. But such a companion should be chose, and taken with you from your first setting out. There can be no pleasure to me without communication: there is not so much as a sprightly thought comes into my mind, which it does not grieve me to have produced alone, without one to communicate it to. But yet it is much better to be alone than in foolish and troublesome company."

MONTAIGNE.

THE visit referred to in the previous chapter was made in the vacation preceding that when our story properly commences. Vivyan had given Markham a general promise to return to Manor Oakham whenever his studies and other arrangements should admit

of it; but such promises are not considered very binding unless when the memory of them is kept fresh by renewed invitations. Vivyan, however, had never heard from his cousin since his return to Cambridge, and was under the impression that he had gone abroad, when, as he was occupied watching the swallows, in the manner already described, his servant entered, and delivered the following letter :

"Manor Oakham, Southampton.

"My dear Frank,

"The Circe is mine. You remember the boat we saw at Cowes last September, and which we both admired so much. I have bought her, and have a grand scheme in my head of a 'voyage pittoresque' to Ireland and Scotland—a kind of romantic survey of the coast, islands, sea-ports, &c. What say you? recollect you are an Irish landlord, and ought to look after your property. You have nothing more agreeable on hand, have you? I will bide your convenience,

but sail with me you must. You can bring your books, and make a scientific as well as a picturesque tour of it, if you are disposed to combine the *utile* with the *dulce*. Would Mr. Peters join us? as you please, only do not fail.

"Yours ever truly,

GEORGE MARKHAM.

"P.S. Don't trouble yourself about a sailor's dress—I can rig you out. I have been at Constantinople and Grand Cairo, and all over the gorgeous East since we met last."

This letter enchanted Vivyan, who really had no such love for his college as to prefer a summer in his chambers, to such a summer as Markham invited him to spend. Yachting, too, was an untasted pleasure; it could not fail to be charming, particularly with his books! He perfectly recollected the Circe—there was sorcery in the very name; but the notion of inviting Mr. Peters upon a party of pleasure of any kind with

his grave, sallow, quadrilateral face, his fluxional eyes, and his blue spectacles,—it sounded like asking my Lord Primate to dance a polka.

The Circe, that idle argosy, chartered to trade in midsummer amusement, lay at anchor, waiting for sailing orders, within two hundred yards of Manor Oakham, whose fine old woods extended to the very margin of the sea, the outermost trees dropping their branches into it. The yacht was manned by three able seamen, and there was a good cargo of champagne and claret in the lockers, with other stores to correspond; for Markham, though an enthusiastic sailor, and as fond of the sea as Byron, was not the man to neglect victualling his bark, or to be content with pickled pork, biscuit, and grog on a voyage.

It was a lovely, still, gray evening, and the sea lay polished as a mirror, and blue as the sky overhead, save the spaces immediately in the shadow of the impendent trees; and there it was so sombre, that at

first you were not aware how lucid it was at the same time. The moon was just risen, and promising to repay the world with a flood of silver for the loss it was soon to experience of the sun's golden rays.

The house was a little in disorder. Pieces of sail-cloth, spars, telescopes, compasses, chronometers, fowling-pieces, and even cutlasses, were scattered over the hall and dining-room, in odd association with busts, bronzes, vases, and candelabras. In one corner of the hall lay a small anchor, a swivel-gun, and a marlin-spike, while a billiard-table in the centre was covered with flags and streamers of as many kinds, as if the little Circe had been a line-of-battle ship. The young men themselves were about to sit down to their last dinner on *terra-firma;* a small table was placed close to a window commanding a view of the element to which they were soon to commit themselves; it was no doubt the situation they would have deliberately chosen, but in point of fact the perplexed servant had selected it as the only

part of the room unencumbered with nautical implements, naval stores, sailors' jackets, charts, and fishing-tackle, books, cigars, and powder-flasks. A chart of the channel was spread on a sofa, Markham was examining it carefully, while Vivyan, immersed in the most luxurious chair he could find, was turning over Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland," when they were both summoned to dinner, which had been laid on the table without exciting their observation.

"This time to-morrow," said Markham to his friend, as he helped him to soup, "we shall dine in a less spacious apartment, but in point of dinner we shall probably be better off than we are to-day; we shall be unlucky if we do not take some good fish, and there is a case or two of champagne in the lockers for which I can answer, if there is any faith in wine-merchants."

"You think we shall sail to-morrow, George," replied Frank, caring little about the fish or the wine, but bent with all his soul upon the voyage.

"Certainly," said Markham, "if the wind is as steady as we are, and some letters arrive which I am expecting. As to the weather, there is no sign of change at present, nor any likelihood of it. The barometer is rising; the moon looks well. I have great faith in the moon as an oracle of the weather; you cannot see her where you are sitting."

Vivyan changed his position to do homage to the queen of the woods and floods, for both her titles were recalled by the delicate splendour which was just beginning to steal over the tops of the oaks, and beyond them again, in a tremulous line of light, athwart the water.

"Is she not beautiful?" cried Markham; "to-morrow night she will be nearly full, and a moon-rise by water is a magnificent spectacle. I saw a glorious one on the sea of Galilee."

Markham loved nature; not ideally like Vivyan, but heartily and honestly, nevertheless. He was a true sportsman,—and all

true sportsmen love the moon, though not many see her rise on the sea of Galilee.

"Observe the effect of the light upon the Circe's shrouds," said Vivyan, returning to his seat.

"Two blunders," said George, good-humouredly. "Frank, I fear you will always be, what we sailors call a land-lubber."

"But how have I blundered now, George?"

"Why, in the first place you insult the Circe by mistaking that clumsy fishing-smack for her; and secondly, you talk of the shrouds when you mean the sails, though I have told you some dozen times that the shrouds of a ship are the ropes, not the canvas."

"How precise you are," said Vivyan, laughing; "but you will see how I shall improve in nautical lore during our cruise. By-the-bye, are we to make for the Irish or the Scotch coast first?"

"You shall decide," said the good-natured Markham.

"Then I am for Ireland," said Frank;

"let us give the more distant expedition precedence; we can run up the Clyde, or visit the islands later in the season, if there is time after our Irish adventures."

"Content," said Markham; "but we shall incidentally see something, too, of the Scottish coast, as our course will lie between that and the Irish; that is, if you have no objection to proceed northwards, and commence our researches after the picturesque along the shores of Donegal."

"What I desire of all things," said Vivyan, "I have heard such accounts of the wild beauties of that part of Ireland; my only wish is that the long vacation were longer by a couple of months."

"We shall make it last as long as we can," said Markham, "and if it should outlast our stock of champagne and our other sea-stores, we must only take in a fresh supply at Belfast, or in Dublin, where we must put in for a day or two, to see the bay which they compare with Naples, and taste the herring for which it is so renowned. But

tell me, Frank, how does it happen that you have never visited your Irish estate:—small as it is, it may be worth looking after."

Vivyan smiled, and said that it was the Irish usage to do every thing by proxy, and that he only conformed to the custom of the country.

"What will surprise you more," he added, "my agent has never seen my property any more than myself. He employs a sub-agent, who resides in the neighbourhood, and collects the rent, which he transmits to his employer in Dublin, who in turn transmits it to me."

"Probably the sub-agent keeps a deputy also," said Markham.

"Most likely," said his cousin.

"I feel no small curiosity," said Markham, "to see a country that is managed in that sort of fashion."

"Depend upon it," said Frank, "we shall see a great many curious things in Ireland."

"We shall keep a list of Irish anomalies,

—but in what part of Ireland is your property situate?"

"In Donegal or Enniskillen, I believe," said the young poco-curate absentee.

Markham laughed heartily.

"Enniskillen is not a county, Frank."

"Not a county!—are you certain?"

Markham was not certain, so they called for a gazetteer to settle the question. They then became exceedingly merry at their own expense over a bottle of claret, much merrier than if they had been perfect masters of Irish geography, so that "ignorance was bliss," in this instance, as in many other cases that occur in life.

"At all events," said Vivyan, rising from the table, "I shall be back to my college and my business in the beginning of November. We shall see a great deal of anomaly in three months."

"Of course," said his cousin, "you must not forget your business, but it is no harm, believe me, to lay in a good stock of health and spirits in the long days;—a man returns

to his books with such force after a little relaxation."

Markham had much more experience in relaxation than study, and so indeed had his cousin also, though he was not in the habit of unbending himself in the same strenuous way.

The arrival of the expected letters closed the evening. Amongst them was one which particularly interested them, with a view to their project of invading Ireland. It was from a nobleman, a distant relative of Markham's, who possessed a considerable property in the same county where Vivyan's small estate was situated. Markham had acquainted Lord Bonham (that was the nobleman's name and title) with his intentions for the summer, and his lordship now wrote to place his house in Ireland at his friend's service, and give him one or two introductions, which he might possibly find it useful or agreeable to avail himself of. As not only Lord Bonham himself, but the persons mentioned in his letter, will be found involved (some in no small degree), in the

course of the events to be related in the sequel, it may not be amiss to place the letter at the disposal of the reader.

"My dear Markham,

"I am both surprised and pleased to hear of your projected cruise. Ireland is worth a visit, and I sincerely wish it were in a state to make it more inviting to visitors than it now is, or probably will be for a longer time than it is agreeable to think of. You are no politician any more than myself, and so much the better for your peace and comfort. As to Ireland, I fear I am no great patriot, but then, as I am not an Irishman (though I have some property there), I neither feel myself bound to wear a green coat or to hold green opinions. Should your voyage lead you to the north-western coast, you will find much romantic attraction, and you will be in the neighbourhood of my more picturesque than profitable patrimony, where my lodge (for it is no more) will be heartily at your service, with the liberty of unlicensed shooting and fishing over some six or seven thousand

acres of moor and loch. You will find the fishing good. I am not so sanguine about the shooting, but there will probably be grouse enough for a pie. You will find hospitality whenever you choose to land, but in the part of the country I speak of there are not many people to exercise that good old virtue, which it is the modern fashion to call a barbarous one. I have one excellent friend, whom if you fall in with, you will not fall out with me for introducing you to. His name is Spenser; he is rector of the parish of Redcross, and as great a curiosity as a fly in amber, for he is a liberal parson in the Orange province of Ulster. I hope you will visit him, and I know you will like him if you do. He is not particularly well off in point of wife, as you will probably find out for yourself, but he has two daughters, against whom I would caution both you and your friend Mr. Vivyan to be on your guard, if your object is merely to see the beauties of Ireland, and not to carry any of them off with you. One of the Miss Spen-

ser's is a particular friend of Lady Bonham; you have perhaps seen her with us; if so, you will not have forgotten her, even though you have since been in the East, and seen Georgians and Circassians. However, be of good courage and visit Redcross. I send you a letter of mark to my good friend the clergyman, and wish you a fair wind and every other blessing that man or yachtsman can desire.

"I remain, my dear Markham,

"Very sincerely yours,

"BONHAM.

"P.S. I knew the father of your friend Vivyan, and I had also an old acquaintanceship with his amiable and eccentric friend in Spain. By-the-bye, my private accounts state that poor Mr. Everard is declining in health alarmingly. If Mr. Vivyan has not heard this intelligence, pray do not mention it, as it is possible my information may be exaggerated."

"I can answer for myself," said Markham,

as he conducted his friend to his bed-room, after reading all the foregoing letter to him, save the postscript, "I can answer for myself that I have no design on Bonham's portable beauties."

"Nor I, unquestionably," said Vivyan, laughing; "but do you recollect the lady his lordship commends so highly?"

"I do not," said Markham, "I fear I have been sadly inattentive to the book of beauty; but as she is a favourite of Lady Bonham's, I have no doubt she is very good and very sensible, as well as handsome."

"Quite a dangerous female character," said his cousin, bidding him good-night.

CHAPTER III.

THE CIRCE SAILS.

"Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
YOUTH on the prow and PLEASURE at the helm."
GRAY.

THE barometer kept rising, the moon was constant to the promise of the previous evening, the morning rose without a cloud on her forehead, and the cousins (almost as early) with minds equally serene and brows alike cloudless. Much of the nautical lumber which we described as so intrusively encumbering apartments never intended for the uses of dock-yards, had been removed on board the night before. What remained was transported at dawn of day,

and before the clock in the cupola over the offices struck six, Markham and Vivyan were on their way through the woods and meadows to the cosy little bay where the pinnace was moored, which was to take them to the Circe. They diverted themselves on the way with omens from the ravens, hawks, and pigeons, losing no opportunity, however, afforded by the windings of the path, the undulations of the ground, and the breaks in the forest, of catching a glimpse of their "varmint" vessel, and vieing with each other in encomiums upon her. Markham was followed by the two inseparable attendants of his excursions by land or by water; Lawrence, his man, looking prematurely sea-sick, and Pedro his dog, in riotous spirits. Lawrence was a native of Britain; Pedro claimed Newfoundland as the country, not of his birth, but of his parentage. Ashore there is no doubt but that Lawrence was the more serviceable of the two vassals, for he was a faithful, intelligent, attentive domestic as ever served a master. But afloat it was

another matter. There Pedro shone to infinitely more advantage; his tastes and delights were so aquatic, his spirits so exuberant, his appetite so keen, his affections so warm, all his doggish virtues so developed, while Lawrence was absolutely good for nothing, not even in "summer seas," except when their surface was smoother than glass itself. It was indeed a proof of his strong attachment to Markham that Lawrence followed him even in his cruises: nothing was to him so inexplicable as how his master, or any body else, could take pleasure in a treacherous, nauseous element, connected in his mind with every image of terror and danger, with sharks, corsairs, shipwreck, hurricanes, and the hideous spectre of the Flying Dutchman. He was everlastingly afraid of being boarded, or swamped, stranded, or water-logged, without any distinct idea of the differences between those several disasters. He had heard tales of Spanish privateers, and fearful anecdotes of Kidd and Paul Jones; but in fact such was

Lawrence's horror of the high seas, that every name he heard mentioned by his master, or Frank Vivyan, with any degree of awe or suspicion, became associated in his mind with piratical ideas. He was not without apprehension of being captured and sold to the Algerines by Daniel O'Connell (whose political exploits were then in the mouth of everybody); and fancy dressed up William Cobbett for him in a fierce cocked hat and a blue coat, with a pistol in one hand and a cutlass in the other.

Admirable studies Markham and Vivyan would themselves have made for a painter, who wanted a pair of handsome young corsairs for a wild sea-piece. Markham was tall, athletic, muscular; his figure would have been a model of manly beauty had it not been a little too robust (inclining to the Milo more than the Antinous), but his bearing was graceful and gentlemanlike, which, combined with good, open, manly, though somewhat rigid features, the complexion of vigorous health, a good, cool, daring eye

(more that of a sportsman, however, than a poet), made him altogether a very handsome man;—and so he was considered by maid and matron for many miles round Southampton, in which neighbourhood the greater part of his stirring life had been spent. His nautical costume became him well, and he wore it with the air and ease of a sailor by craft; for though a young man, George was an ancient mariner, scarcely remembering the time when ropes and cables were not as "familiar to him as his garter."

A shout of welcome and triumph burst from the little crew, with whom he was highly popular, when Markham, followed by his cousin, and the ghastly Lawrence, jumped with a cheer on the snow-white deck of the Circe. For a few moments he engrossed all eyes and all admiration, but Frank Vivyan was not long without receiving his full share of attention and applause. He looked an Adonis in his sailor's dress, or a Paris setting out to make a Helen his booty, and perfectly bewitched the rugged

tars with the radiance of his countenance, and the singular elegance of his slight person. He was such a contrast to his cousin, of such a different style of beauty; yet his present attire,—the loose blue jacket, the cap with its gold band, the chequered shirt, the black ribbon, the white vest and trousers,—had the advantage of taking something from the delicacy of his exterior, and giving him a manlier air than he had yet attained to. In short, you have only to imagine Don Juan following Lambro's profession, to form some notion of the picture which Vivyan presented that morning as he came on board, in the sinecure capacity of first-lieutenant to his cousin.

"*Aura veni!*" he cried, as they weighed anchor: and the breeze seemed to relish being so classically wooed, for it sprang cheerfully up; the buxom white sail welcomed it to its swelling bosom; and the Circe darted like an arrow from her station, smashing the sparkling water into foam, resembling innumerable fragments of crystal and emerald.

The frothing, gurgling sound of the waves curling round the keel was music to the ears of the young men, particularly to Markham's. Another moment, and a charming view presented itself. The wood that descended to the beach, the high lawn beyond (itself scattered with trees of the stateliest growth), the ancient manor-house, gray, irregular, and massive, with the heights that sheltered it behind,—formed a beautiful scrap of scenery, though of a quiet and civilised character, widely different from that which our mariners were going in quest of.

Having now fairly embarked our yachtsmen, we must leave them for some time on the high seas to the mercy of winds and waves, hoping that Markham may prove a skilful seaman enough to carry the Circe safe to the shores of Donegal. The most ruinous mother could not have cockered and petted Vivyan more than George did during that voyage. From stem to stern every thing on board was arranged for Vivyan's ease, luxury, and amusement.

Markham had neglected nothing, — coffee, cigars, ice, liqueurs, eau-de-Cologne and eau-de-vie, fruit, vegetables, games of several kinds, abundance of amusing books and prints ; couches or divans to loll, chat, smoke, or sleep on ; excellent telescopes, an armoury of fowling-pieces and rifles, a guitar, and a violin ; with every work of note that had ever been published, illustrative of the scenery and topography of the parts of the kingdom which it was their purpose to visit, and to which we now hasten before them.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARSONAGE.

"And now they nigh approached to the sted,
Where those fair mermaids dwelt: it was a still
And calmy bay, on one side sheltered
With the broad shadow of a hoary hill."

THE FAERY QUEEN.

A THOUSAND picturesque bays and creeks indent the western and north-western shores of Ireland, most attractive to the lovers of coast scenery, and most commodious as fishing stations, though sharing, of course, the general marked inattention of the uncivil Irish to the advantages with which Nature has blessed them. The scenery at some points of the coast in question is as fine, per-

haps, as any of its class in the British islands. The mountain chains of the interior, apparelled in gold and purple by the gorse and heather, terminate in a series of headlands of every variety of shape and altitude, throwing themselves boldly into the Atlantic, which, whirling into the gorges between them, forms a succession of lochs, more or less exposed to the fury of the ocean, according to their extent and form, but sometimes exhibiting in their windings all the quiet beauty of the stream-fed mountain lake. Approaching such spots as these by water, the contrast is very striking between the boiling surf through which you make your perilous way into the inlet, and the repose that reigns often at no great distance from its mouth. It is like the calm of settled government after the throes of revolutionary violence, when revolution has the good fortune to be succeeded by peace and order.

There existed some twenty years ago, and probably still exists, a parsonage in the county of Donegal, and parish of Redcross,

situated close to the water edge, on the shores of a small but beautiful arm of the sea, which resembled, just at that place, one of the many romantic lakes or pools which abound in the Welsh highlands. The parsonage (a comfortable house, containing accommodation for a large family, but with no great architectural pretensions) stood on the northern side of the creek, or *fiorde* (as such inlets are called in Norway), so that it enjoyed a southern exposure, beside being very well sheltered on the north and north-east by a lofty range of hills, whose steep rocky sides, strewed with patches of wild vegetation (delicious browsing for sheep), rose like a wall over it. In the westerly direction, where the hills were least precipitous, a copse of oak and birch crept from their base to the very summits ; and towards the east, or to the left of the parsonage, a high point of rock, which stood boldly into the water, was crested in a very imposing manner with a group of pines, or trees of that species, whose tops were fired at midsummer with the sun's

beams, long before their golden track was visible upon the bosom of the lake. A few acres of greensward—the natural turf improved by not much manual labour—filled up the space between the house and the beach, consisting of a narrow strip of sand, which, not being itself often encroached on by the waves, manifested equal forbearance to the lawn, which it seemed to skirt with silver. From the front of the parsonage the view was exquisite, for it not only commanded the loch itself, with its picturesque banks, distinguished by their air of idle grandeur, but the additional prospect of a not very distant mountain range beyond, one of whose numerous peaks was nearly of a sugar-loaf form, and domineered superbly, with its fine dark blue cone, over the less ambitious parts of the chain.

The scenery altogether was the wildest imaginable, but its wildness was chastened by its unity and simplicity. Nature is well compared by a German writer to a great poet, "who produces his greatest effects with

the fewest means ;" a great thought, and a few household words to clothe it.

It was evident that the tenants of the parsonage were in the habit of enjoying the scenery around them, from the water as well as from the land, for a small pier, neatly constructed with square massive blocks of granite, had been thrown some twenty feet out into the loch, forming not only a quay for embarkation, but a kind of diminutive harbour, within which was now moored a small but smart cutter, destined no doubt for distant voyages, as well as a boat, like a Thames wherry, designed for cruises not far from home. At the extremity of the pier was erected a flag-staff, supported by iron stays; there was generally breeze enough in a mountain region so close to the sea to keep the gay ensign floating, but on the evening when our story commences, there was scarcely a breath to stir an aspen-leaf; the flag had ceased to wave, and drooped like the pendent from a woman's ear.

The sun was preparing to set in all his

pomp, and Mr. Spenser, the rector, with his son Sydney, two marriageable daughters, Arabella and Elizabeth, and one or two younger children, were assembled after dinner in front of the parsonage, to enjoy the spectacle. Mr. Spenser was sitting, the rest were standing, all more or less intent upon the scene before them; nor were they enjoying it in silence, but, on the contrary, conversing eagerly, noticing the beauties of the prospect, and speculating upon that ever-debateable topic in these climes—the weather of to-morrow.

A cruise of pleasure seemed to be on the *tapis*. At a distance of about half a league from the mouth of the *fiorde* was a very small but extremely picturesque island, a frequent summer haunt of the Spensers; they held it in joint tenancy with a nation of rabbits, and it was to this little speck in the ocean that they were contemplating a voyage and pic-nic on the following day.

"And a splendid day it will be," cried Sydney, a robust, square-built youth, attired

in a kind of sailor's dress, a handsome boy, but with features that indicated both sensuality and wilfulness, as if he had either been left untutored and undisciplined, or as if discipline had been thrown away upon him. The tone of his voice, too, was boorish, as if he kept other company occasionally than that in which we now see him.

"I am no weather-seer," said his father, a comely, grave man, between forty-five and fifty, whose attire announced the well-beneficed clergyman, and whose placid countenance, at once benign and intellectual, proclaimed him one of the race of gentle shepherds.

"You have not yet visited your island this summer," he added, addressing the junior branches of his family.

"The island! the island!" shouted the little Spensers in chorus.

"Listen!" said Elizabeth, the rector's second daughter, a radiant brunette of eighteen, with a figure that was perfect, and a face of the sweetest and noblest expression.

She spoke with one hand on the bare shoulder of her little brother, and a finger of the other raised to command attention.

"The island!" replied a voice from afar, as of a viewless speaker;—it was a voice, and nothing but a voice, for the spot was remarkable for its echo, and the shrill and joyful cry of the children came back from the rocks and hills with a sharpness and fidelity which the famous echo of Blarney could not have surpassed.

Sydney, however, said, he thought there was a still more wonderful echo on the island, and he hoped his friend Dudley Dawson would bring his French-horn, to awaken it.

"You surely did not invite Mr. Dawson!" said the brown girl, but in a low but displeased tone, as if unwilling to stir a painful subject. Her elder sister, Arabella, expressed her disapprobation in stronger terms.

"But I did," replied the young man, rudely, and left the circle; perhaps to superintend the preparations for the morrow's amusement. He spoke with a clownishness

of phrase and accent, which you were surprised to hear in a member of such a group, and the brother of such sisters.

The placid clergyman made no remark, but sat with one of his courtly legs crossed on the other, gazing on the landscape, murmuring to himself lines of Ovid, and verses of Milton, on the phenomena of echo, for his mind was stored with all that is sweet and beautiful in ancient and modern poetry.

The crisis of the sunset was now approaching; the sun descended rapidly upon the brow of the mountain which intercepted the view of the Atlantic. The variegated clouds lay in long, irregular, fleecy masses, parallel to the horizon, their edges burnished by the retiring luminary, whose blazing disc only appeared in the intervening spaces, sometimes so contracted as only to disclose a slender bar of intense lustre, like an ingot of ruddy gold. But directly the sun dropped below the lowest cloud of the strata, there was nothing to obstruct his splendour until he touched the summit of the mountain,

when he soon vanished, to illumine and gladden other lands.

Often as the Spensers had witnessed the same imposing spectacle from the same spot, they had never admired it so much. As still they gazed, their contemplation was disturbed by a loud clear hurrah, proceeding from the heights on the opposite side of the creek.

"Uncle Woodward!" exclaimed several voices, instantly. Some called him "Uncle Hercules."

The quarter from which the shout proceeded was more easily discovered than the personage to whom it was ascribed, for the distance across the inlet was upwards of a mile, and the tortuous way in which the road ran upon that side, often altogether hidden by masses of rocks, or clumps of heather and brushwood, rendered it often difficult and sometimes impossible to detect where the road ran at all. In fact, it had been carved in days of rough but daring engineering, and when other considerations

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besides public convenience influenced road-making in Ireland, in a continual steep zig-zag, from the margin of the creek to the summit of the impending hills, an extent of some four or five miles, without one furlong which you could travel with tolerable safety, except on foot, or mounted on one of the sure-footed ponys of the country.

Every eye was strained in the direction of the familiar signal.

"He will shout again, if it is your uncle," said Mr. Spenser.

"I think I see him, papa," said one of the children,—"see, just at the tall white rock, where the eagles used to build until last summer, when Sydney shot that grand one."

"It was not Sydney; it was Mr. Dawson," lisped the other little one.

"I see nothing yet," said Mr. Spenser.

Another hurrah was heard as he spoke, and almost at the same instant Mr. Spenser, waving his hat, pointed to a spot where the road came conspicuously into view, directly opposite the parsonage, and about one hun-

dred and fifty feet above the level of the water. The correctness of the discovery was soon acknowledged ; the girls waved their handkerchiefs, and their little brother returned his uncle's greeting with a scream, which, though very inferior in sonorous effect, probably reached his ear, for again the same stentorian salute came booming across the estuary, multiplied by a score of echoes.

A few moments brought our new acquaintance to the water's edge, for he had his stout mountain hack under him, a pony in whom discretion and valour were blended in the justest proportions, and who was so familiar with up-hill and down-hill, that he actually never stumbled except upon level ground. There was a snug little deep sandy cove, just where the precipitous road seemingly tumbled down upon the beach ; and just above high-water mark was a low rock, to which, by means of an iron ring, was attached a boat, with a couple of oars, designed expressly for the accommodation of

those who, having to cross the inlet, like Mr. Woodward, preferred this short cut to a circuitous route which led you for a couple of miles along the shore, until you gained a point where the estuary was narrow enough to be spanned by a rude wooden bridge.

The Spensers watched their relative's proceedings with the liveliest interest, increased by some little surprise at receiving a visit from him on that particular evening. He loosed the boat from the ring, drew it down along the smooth tawny sand, launched and almost simultaneously stepped into it, leaving the pony to take care of himself, which he was extremely well able to do. A couple of lusty strokes, such as only a very powerful man could have given, pushed the boat into deep water. He then paused, but it was only to throw off his hat and coat, preparatory to resuming the oar with still greater vigour.

"My uncle deserves to be called Hercules," said Sydney, who had just returned, raising a hearty cheer which his muscular

relative as heartily responded to ; and the cheering and counter-cheering lasted until the boatman gained the shore, and was surrounded and welcomed by the Spensers. He towered above them all like a dromedary in a flock of sheep. There was not another such strapping fellow in all the diocese, nay, in all the arch-diocese, in either Protestant establishment, Catholic church, or Presbyterian synod. Hercules Woodward stood six feet three inches in his stocking-feet, and he was broad and brawny in proportion. Though possessing a giant's strength, however, you soon perceived that he was not the man to make giant-like use of it. He had the honestest though roughest set of features imaginable; a face as massive and strongly marked as those which sculptors assign to river-gods, a high bald forehead, bushy, reddish whiskers, and good-humoured but powerful eyes, over which a pair of enormous brows beetled, with an endeavour, not always unsuccessful, to give them a ferocious aspect.

Such was his person. His dress was very much in keeping with it. He wore a short

frock, or rather jacket, of dark blue cloth, not much finer than frieze; it was something between a sailor's jacket and a shooting-coat. His trousers, very wide and very short, were of strong gray plaid, the coarsest of the kind that is called shepherd's, and his waistcoat was from the same piece ; a black silk handkerchief loosely encircled his hirsute throat ; his feet were furnished with shoes such as men wear in snipe-shooting, and his head was provided with a low-crowned and broad-brimmed glazed hat. And now that you have him before you, such as nature formed, and the tailor finished him, to what profession would you suppose him to belong? It was difficult enough to believe that he was Mr. Spenser's brother-in-law, but it will be harder still to credit what is equally true ;—he was also his curate !

There was a marked difference in the greetings and receptions "my uncle, the curate," met with from the two ladies. By Elizabeth he was received with cordiality and tenderness, by her elder sister with cold and fastidious civility. It gave you an insight into the cha-

racters of the two girls. Nothing could ever conquer Arabella Spenser's repugnance to her rustic relative, neither her father's regard for him, his own sterling virtues, or the fact that he was the husband of her Aunt Carry, one of the worthiest, as she was one of the largest, specimens of womankind.

To Mr. Spenser, indeed, he was a most striking contrast. Mr. Spenser was so quiet and refined ; the intellectual predominated in him so much above the physical ; his person was so elegant, his manners so calm and courtly. In fact, it was obvious that they had been born in different spheres of society ; the rector was Corinthian, the curate Doric; and moreover, to distinguish them still further asunder, the former was by origin and education an Englishman, while the latter was the genuine indigenous growth of the province of Ulster, descended from a plain bluff race of ancestors, who had sent many a good rough scholar up to Dublin College, and supplied many a sturdy shepherd to the Irish church.

CHAPTER V.

THE WEATHER-SEER.

The curate was a weather-seer, if the rector was not. Not a mountaineer in the country could predict wet or dry, hot or cold, a calm or a hurricane, so unerringly as Hercules Woodward, because in fact, nobody lived so much abroad as he did, and was so conversant with the elements in all their aspects and vicissitudes. With earth, air, and ocean, at least, he lived on terms of daily familiarity. His acquaintance with fire was not quite so intimate, though no man enjoyed a blazing one of turf more of an evening, when he had his wife at his side, and his little Woodwards littered about him.

It was the purest as well as the most active

good nature which brought Hercules over to the parsonage that evening, all the long way from the town of Redcross, where he dwelt.

"You are not dreaming of sailing to-morrow," he said, with his bluff, stormy voice, and striding at the same time towards the house, with his younger niece, Elizabeth, on his arm, where she looked something like a sprig of geranium hanging from a stalwart mountain ash.

"Yes, indeed we are, uncle," replied several voices, eagerly. Hercules looked unpropitious.

"Did you see the sun set, uncle?" cried the little Arthur Spenser.

"Shan't we have a charming day to morrow ?" cried his smaller sister.

"For barnacle and wild ducks, Mysie," replied the curate, looking down at the little girl, as if from the top of a steeple.

"You don't mean to say it will be wet, sir ?" growled Sydney, with temper, apprehensive of the effects of his uncle's opinion upon the rest of the party.

"Wet and wind, and plenty of both. The car of day will be a covered car to-morrow, Syd, my boy," replied his uncle, taking no notice of his nephew's ungracious looks and tones, being probably accustomed to such displays of temper.

The prediction, however, caused general surprise; and the little Spensers, as well as their elder brother, looked considerably disconcerted by it.

"I'll tell you more," continued Hercules, not thinking much of the pain he was giving in such a cause, "we are going to have several days of wild weather:—it was nothing else brought me over. I was afraid you might venture out in the morning and get capsized in one of those squalls to which that piece of water there is subject at times, innocent as it looks at the present moment."

Sydney's aspect lowered, but he kept a passionate silence.

"Uncle, you are such a mar-plot," said one of the younger children, half pettishly, half playfully.

"Never mind, Mysie, we shall have our sail," muttered Sydney, in a gruff, refractory tone, which possibly nobody heard, for no notice was taken of it. Elizabeth gently reproved the child for calling her uncle a marplot and thanked him over and over again for his kindness, pressing him at the same time to stay that night at the parsonage.

"What would your aunt say to that, Lizzy?" answered her huge relative,—"no, Lizzy, my dear, I'll drink tea with you, and then across the water again to the *dulce domum*. Val, how is Mag this evening?"

Mr. Spenser's name was Valentine, and his wife's was Margaret. The curate had some familiar abbreviation for every body he was related to or intimate with, except his niece Arabella, whose name he uniformly pronounced in full, though her father sometimes called her Bell. The curate was a notable tea-drinker, and as proud of the number of his cups as topers are of the number of their bottles. Although Father

Mathew had not yet appeared, there was a Temperance Society in the parish of Red cross, which had Mr. Woodward's cordial support. Mr. Spenser, though any thing but a votary of Bacchus, declined joining the society; he used pleasantly to observe that temperance was "a very proper virtue in a curate."

Uncle Woodward drank six cups upon that occasion. It was not a very lively meal. Sydney was gloomy and morose; Arabella frigid, the rector abstracted; Elizabeth alone exerted herself to make her uncle feel comfortable and at home, nor was it difficult to do so, for nobody was less exacting, though nobody felt more keenly the absence of warmth when he had a right to expect it. But his stay was brief; for the evening was falling rapidly; in fact, it was nearly dark when he rose with even more than his wonted abruptness, and bade them all good-night, shaking hands with every one, and even kissing a few of them. The

curate shook hands with a vigour that was sometimes distressing; but friendly, warm-hearted people readily pardoned the momentary pain to their fingers, for the sake of the cordiality that accompanied the squeeze.

Mr. Spenser accompanied his brother-in-law to the little harbour.

"When shall I see you again, Hercules?" he said; "I am anxious to have your advice on a matter of very great importance."

"I'll come over in the morning," said the curate.

"Bring Carry with you," said his brother-in-law.

"The weather won't do for that, Val. There will be a storm, rely upon it. On no account allow Sidney to sail. Good night, Val, good night;" and with that the stout curate seized the oars again, and pushed across the shadowy water.

"I trust," said Mr. Spenser to himself, as he walked back to the house, "that Lord

Bonham's friends are not at sea, or that they will get into some port before the gale rises." Lord Bonham had written to advertise him of the probability of his receiving a visit from the Circe about this time.

The rector, on returning to the drawing-room, found his son arranging the details of the next day's expedition, just as if nothing had occurred to render its postponement advisable. It was a great relief to his daughters, no small surprise to them likewise, when their father, with a decision very unusual to him, acted on his brother-in-law's prudent advice, and interdicted the voyage in the most absolute manner.

Before the parsonage was asleep that night the moaning of the wind at intervals, accompanied with the rattling of windows, and the flapping of the branches of rose trees and woodbine against the glass, promised to verify the prophecies of Mr. Woodward only too completely. The rector got very little rest, but it was his wife and not the wind that dis-

turbed his slumbers. Mrs. Spenser was not a very comfortable consort in the calmest weather, but she was particularly disagreeable in a high wind. This, however, is a premature peep behind the bed-room curtains.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PASRONAGE ASLEEP.

"Now the cricket's chirp is heard,
Loud as note of any bird;
And the ticking of the clock
Is become a mighty knock;
Enter we the silent house,
With the footsteps of a mouse;
Creep along the corridor,
Mark we every chamber-door,
Let the crayon make no sound,
None must know our midnight round."

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITORS.

WHEN people are asleep, it is a very good opportunity for a little gossip on their affairs and antecedents, and not a bad time either to take casts of their faces, and examine the bumps on their heads.

Mr. Spenser had now been incumbent of the parish of Redcross for about ten years. He came to it shortly after his marriage with

his present wife (who was the step-mother of Arabella, Elizabeth, and Sydney), and her eldest child was now entering his eighth year. The benefice was a good one, worth from eight hundred to a thousand pounds per annum, and had been bestowed upon him by its patron, Lord Bonham, a nobleman with whom Mr. Spenser had formed a close friendship, originally at Eton, and subsequently at Cambridge. His lordship's estate, which we have already mentioned, lay in the neighbourhood of Redcross; but there was no mansion upon it, only a shooting lodge, where he occasionally established himself for grouse-shooting or salmon-fishing. He offered his agency to his friend along with the parish, but although such a union of offices was a common thing in Ireland at the time, Mr. Spenser's strict notions of clerical duty and propriety revolted at it, and he firmly declined this additional proof of Lord Bonham's friendship, although his increasing family rendered an augmentation of income a point of no small importance. The rector

had been more fortunate in his first than in his second marriage. His first wife was a woman of strong sense, sterling worth, and great personal attractions. The beauties of her mind she transmitted to her daughter Elizabeth ; those of her person only to Arabella. The present Mrs. Spenser was a discontented, intractable, selfish, and eccentric woman, and had been an invalid, and a most vexatious one, ever since the birth of her youngest child, keeping her bed-room seven or eight months of the year, and talking of returning to it the remaining four or five. Her complaint was one of the non-descript disorders, called nervous, one part real to nine parts fanciful ; the sources of untold profits to doctors, and untold miseries to husbands. If people were harmless in proportion to their imbecility, it would be all well ; but the misfortune is, that those who have the least control over themselves, often possess the most powerful and mischievous ascendency over others. This was remarkably illustrated in the instance of Mr. and Mrs. Spenser. The rector had all the weak-

nesses of an amiable character, and his wife all the weaknesses of a selfish one. The two sets of weaknesses, united in the bonds of matrimony, made a very uneasy union, and Mr. Spenser would indeed have been very unhappy in his second marriage, only for the extreme placidity of his temper, the society of his daughters, and his passionate love of books. When the living plagued him, he often fled to the dead for refuge, and found in literary pleasures sweet though short respites from his conjugal griefs. And here let us pause, and give a word of advice to men in Mr. Spenser's position of life.

A man in moderate circumstances, particularly a widower with children, who thinks of marrying a lady in delicate health, ought to examine himself, and see that he possesses not only the qualities that befit the master of a house, but those that are indispensable in a mistress likewise. In fact, being destined to discharge the united functions of the father and mother of his family, he ought to be an active, bustling, motherly, managing sort of a gentleman, skilled in

nursery affairs, equal to the control of housemaids, and not above "meddling with buck-washing;" he should know as much as possible about chin-coughs and teething, to which branches of useful knowledge were he to add some tincture of the science of pickling and preserving, it would not be amiss, under the circumstances. An invalid wife is a very expensive article of luxury even to a gentleman with a thousand a year, and so Mr. Spenser found it. Had he made as good a choice as his curate did, it would have saved him a couple of hundreds annually at the least; he would have had a buxom helpmate to control his servants and govern his children for him, instead of the croaking turtle he had, who gave him more trouble than all the rest of the establishment put together.

Mrs. Spenser had never accommodated herself to life in Ireland, particularly to the life of a country parson in the wildest and loneliest part of the island. She quarrelled with the people, and she quarrelled with the climate; there was always either a storm in

the atmosphere, or a tempest in the political world—always something to discompose her; and when there was nothing, nothing answered equally well. You are not to suppose that she would have been happy and contented in a country without a breath of wind, either literal or metaphorical. On the contrary, she was a woman to raise a storm wherever she happened to be; she would get you up a hurricane in an exhausted receiver, and find or make something uncomfortable in Eden itself. The rector was free from avarice, and the only ambition he had was a literary one; but his helpmate was as covetous as Mammon, and as ambitious as Lucifer. She never forgave a tithe defaulter, and was for ever instigating her husband to wring the uttermost farthing out of his parishioners; while, at the same time, she thought it extremely hard that he should discharge any pastoral duty at all; continually urging him to settle in Dublin, where a man of his talents and address, enjoying the smiles of a Lord-Lieutenant, and charming with his witty and ele-

gant conversation the vice-regal circle, might fairly aspire to high preferment in the church —even to change his simple pastoral crook for a crozier. It would have been strange, indeed, if such qualities as these in a wife had not exercised a very decided influence on the life and fortunes of an easy uxorious husband.

The main defect of Mr. Spenser's character (legible in his countenance) was its deplorable want of energy. With a little firmness he might have been a very happy man ; without it, he was the sport of a thousand passions and caprices from which his own mind was perfectly free. He was formed for contemplation, not for action ; a man of the study and the bower, not a man of business, or the world. He was vigorous with his pen or at his books ; industrious only in his green-leather arm-leather. Control over his children he had none, or extremely little ; he spared no expense either on their accomplishments, or their amusements, but here his parental interference ended : if Sydney rioted at a sufficient dis-

tance from the library, and if he could always have one of his girls to accompany him in a walk, or a ride, and had Arabella to sing little French romances after tea of an evening, he was content.

His eldest son, far from being his comfort or pride, was now beginning to give him much uneasiness, and was destined to give him more. It was the rector's own fault—he had been a careless father, and he could not and did not escape the consequences of neglecting his parental duties. With his daughters Arabella and Elizabeth, however, he had better reason to be pleased ; his mild brown eye rested with joy upon them both, but with most delight upon the elder, doubtless because she was her mother's likeness, for in every thing else Elizabeth far excelled.

They differed strikingly in both person and mind. Arabella was tall, fair-haired, with delicate and very handsome features ; her figure was also very good, her carriage distinguished, but haughty ; and the same expression, mixed with something of petu-

lance and scorn, was visible in her eyes and on her lips, agreeing perfectly with her mode of receiving the homespun curate, although so closely connected with her. At the same time she was not decidedly or strikingly unamiable, only vain, frivolous, cold, and egotistical, not even returning her father's fond preference with one-half of her sister's affection and devotedness. In short, she was a woman without passions and without a heart. Elizabeth Spenser was no common girl. In person she was not so tall as her sister, but, though younger, she was even more mature in appearance; somewhat rounder, promising in a short time to be a robust as well as a beauteous woman. Her hair was a dark brown, and nature had been prodigal to her of that loveliest of female ornaments. Her eyes were dark also, only more gray than black. The nose was slightly aquiline; it made her countenance a commanding one; and the expression of her mouth, too, was a further indication of energy and self-reliance. Yet the best part of her loveliness was that with

which her mind irradiated her person, as the beauty of a lamp is shown by the pure bright flame within it. Elizabeth's opportunities of improvement had not been greater than her sister's ; but as two neighbouring vineyards, with the same cultivation to enrich the soil, and the same sun to ripen the grape, will produce wines of the most different qualities and value, so did the rector's daughters, under the same roof, the same influences, and the same instructions, moving in the same society, keeping the same company, hearing the same conversation, and surrounded by the same books and other means of improvement, grow up to woman's estate, with minds and characters totally dissimilar in flavour and in worth.

In Elizabeth Spenser the spirits of love and knowledge—the seraphic and cherubic characters, to borrow the old Rabbinical distinction—were beautifully blended. With all the soft attributes of her sex, were combined a solidity of judgment, and a sincerity,

depth, and vigour of character, which kept them from degenerating into mere female fondnesses, and enabled her in after life to act a very difficult part incomparably well, in several capacities, and through severe trials. She was the only member of the family by whom Sydney was not systematically spoiled ; her influence was, of course, but a feeble substitute for parental authority, but it was sometimes not altogether unavailing. She was more capable, however, of being useful to the little ones, who, between their hypochondriac mother, and a governess, —who, though active enough, occupied herself very little with her pupils,—were in a very fair way to be ruined. Here Elizabeth had a hard card to play, for Mrs. Spenser was as jealous of interference with her motherly prerogatives as she was deficient in the discharge of her motherly duties. It was not without considerable address that Elizabeth succeeded in usurping the degree of influence absolutely necessary to prevent Mrs. Spenser from ruining her children by proxy.

For the useful and valuable attributes of her character, Elizabeth Spenser was indebted chiefly to the influence, instruction, and example of Mrs. Woodward, her aunt, the wife of the colossal curate. When Mr. Spenser first went over to Ireland to take possession of his benefice, he was accompanied not only by his present wife, but by his sister Caroline, or Carry, as she was commonly called in the family. We shall presently make this excellent lady's acquaintance. The wonder was how Caroline Spenser had remained single so very long ; she had so many of the qualities that marrying men of sense look for in women ; her presence was so goodly, her understanding so strong, while for prudence she was a proverb. But she had no fortune, or a very small one, and—she was formidably fat.

Besides (so deceitful are appearances and so inscrutable the ways of women), she did not seem to be a marrying woman at all, and least of all did any body dream that she had preserved her heart for upwards of thirty years in a polished circle in England, to lose

it at the end of that period, and lose it abruptly to a poor curate in the wildest part of Ireland. Mr. Woodward was curate of Redcross when Mr. Spenser was appointed to it. If ever there was love at first sight this was a case of it. There was nothing odd in Hercules falling in love with Caroline Spenser, her attractions were so exuberant; but people *did* wonder a little at Caroline so promptly returning the fire, the curate was so very rough a diamond, and Carry, though her charms had a tendency to coarseness, was coarse in no other way. But "*paucas palabras*," as Christopher Sly says. They met, they loved, they married; one of the first duties Mr. Spenser performed in the little church of Redcross was to unite his flourishing sister in the holy bands of matrimony to his gigantic curate.

She was a serious loss to her brother, particularly as the second Mrs. Spenser soon began to exhibit her physical as well as moral disqualifications for the management of a family.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CURATE AT HOME.

"From one great source the human nature springs,
And subjects will be indolent as kings;
Hence ev'ry viceroy pays a substitute,
And hence deputed ministers depute;
Kings hireling secretaries keep, and these
Must have their secretaries too; for ease
Bishops place rectors through their holy sees,
And rectors mince them into curacies.
'Mong all the wretches found on Proxy's list,
That crawl 'twixt heaven and earth, and scarce subsist;
'Mong all the lots to which the poor is heir,
The hardest portion is the curate's share."

THE CURATE. *By the Rev. Evans Lloyd.*

THE curate's house, an old, white, ungainly, three-storied building, with a number of long narrow windows, was situated near one end of the town of Redcross, within a courtyard, surrounded by a dilapidated wall, which was decked in summer with red snap-

dragons, and gaudy but sweet wall-flowers. A tall gate, with taller pillars, topped with a pair of stone globes, all white-washed, admitted you into the yard; and there, on your way to the door of the house, you probably encountered a couple of young pigs, or a little squadron of ducks and ducklings, bound for a small circular pond in the spacious, luxuriant, well-tilled, kitchen-garden (a wilderness of vegetables and red roses) behind the house. On the ground-floor were three rooms: one was a parlour and drawing-room combined; another was Mr. Woodward's sanctuary; and the third the store-room of his wife, sometimes called "Carry's Miscellany," and sometimes the "Mother's Magazine." The upper apartments were small and numerous (you will find it generally the case in the house of a curate); the highest of all somewhat crazy, and shaky in gales of wind; and none very luxuriously furnished. The whole was oddly surmounted by an hexagonal turret, formed almost entirely of glass, crowned

with a weather-cock, and called the Observatory. It was nothing but the distance prevented you from seeing the United States from this belvedere. It contained an old refracting telescope upon a rickety stand, of power enough to exhibit some of Jupiter's moons, but of no great use for the discovery of new planets or nebulæ. A few scattered copy-books, grammars, and catechisms, with a twelve-inch globe, showed that Carry occasionally schooled her children there; but it answered other purposes also : it served as a supernumerary dressing-room when there were visitors ; and as a great treat and reward to the little Woodwards after a long career of industry and virtue, tea was now and then taken in the observatory; but this was a secular event, and only took place in very fine weather, about the full of the moon.

Mrs. Woodward did a great deal,—perhaps all it was in her power to do,—but it was an irregular, harem-scarem house, notwithstanding. The fact was, that with the

inveterate propensities of Hercules, more or less inherited or aped by his children, and the careless, untidy, slattern, take-it-easy, and deuce-may-care habits of the Irish maid-servants, it was next to impossible to preserve (with a curate's paltry income) any thing like English order and discipline. Carry soon almost gave it up, contenting herself with keeping her own more especial territories neat, taking care that her children should be scrubbed and curried with all the vigour of some powerful maidenly arm every morning of their lives, and seeing that there was always a scrupulously clean and brilliantly white cloth on her table, no matter how plain the meal was, even an Irish stew, which was turtle and venison to her husband. Often did Carry threaten to enforce general order on some future day, commonly on the next Monday; but *that* Monday was like the Greek calends, or the Feast of Next-Never-Come-Tide, and Carry at last gave up even threatening it. Circumstances were too strong for her; nay, so enthusiastically de-

voted was she to Hercules, that she felt, and owned she felt, herself growing more and more tolerant every day of the domestic disorder and confusion, out of which he was like a fish out of water. Fortunately, she was of such a cheerful, hopeful, elastic temperament,—or how else could she have brought up such a troop of Woodwards half so well and so respectably as she did. Fortunately, too, though the most affectionate creature in the world, she was not a woman to be imposed on, or trifled with; but a little authoritative, and carried matters with a higher hand than she would perhaps have done, had her husband been more at home, or less unfit than he was, by reason of his very size and strength, to deal with the irregularities of children. One day, when her eldest boy was seven or eight years old, he committed some serious infraction of the law, of which Carry made complaint to Hercules, who was forthwith proceeding to punish the malefactor with nothing less than a club. Carry was frightened out of her life, took

the culprit into her own hands, settled the matter in a motherly way, and never troubled her husband again with the enforcement of nursery discipline.

She used pleasantly to say that the rod was in her house a branch of economy ; it enabled her, for instance, to do without a railing round the pond in the garden, and to dispense with the services of a nursery governess ; a title, indeed, by which it was known and respected in the family.

It was dark, and growing late, when the worthy curate returned that night to this queer house and the loving and anxious wife of his bosom. Carry had despatched her great children to bed, and was sitting up for him, with a little one in its cradle at her side, in the low, spacious, square, unpapered, rudely furnished room, called the study; a very different room from Mr. Spenser's library ; but Hercules liked it all the better for the difference, comfort being inextricably associated in his mind with the state of things called "higgledy-piggledy." It cer-

tainly was a curiosity. Books, carpenter's-tools, shoes that looked as if they had walked round the world, a very untidy washing-stand, fishing-rods and tackle, old hats and boat-cloaks, a fowling-piece and a duck-gun, with twenty other miscellaneous articles strewed the apartment in "most admired disorder." In one corner was a broken oar, a spade, and a wooden hay-fork; in another, a collection of walking-sticks and cudgels, large and various enough to set up a shop with; a row of shelves intended for books were stuffed with papers, packets of garden-seeds, pruning-knives, a shot-canister, with some horn and tin vessels intended for pic-nics; and all these things were covered with no very thin coating of dust, for the curate was always fidgety when his wife, or her maids, even talked of "settling" his "study," and there was a sort of understanding (sometimes violated certainly) that brush and broom were not to molest him more than once or twice in the year, about certain great festivals of the church.

There was a blazing turf-fire in the grate, the evening having grown coolish, and Carry not being certain whether her husband would take tea at the parsonage or not. Contemplate her by the alternately rosy and golden light from the turf-fire! She is worth looking at, and has comfort enough in her face and her person to make the apartment of the neediest curate in the church comfortable. What age would you give her credit or discredit for? Forty. Not quite so much by four or five years; a year or two younger than her brother, Mr. Spenser. And she is very fair and very fat, too; you can hardly see the chair she sits on, she overspreads it so; but her corpulence has not yet obliterated her shapes, and merged them, as, alas, it will probably do ten years hence, in one huge round mass of maternity. She is a glorious woman, Aunt Carry, as she sits there, with her red shawl drawn cosily round her, over her habitual black silk dress, expanded before the hearth, but not very close to the fire, with one plump foot to that of the cradle,

making or mending a small pair of sky-blue trousers, and every now and then listening to catch the sound from the road of the hoofs of her husband's pony. She is a glorious woman within and without ; bursting not with comeliness only, but with every matronly virtue, and housewifely accomplishment ; her heart is as ample as her person ; she is thrice-blessed with good-sense, good-nature, and good-humour inexhaustible ; industrious as a working-bee, and for economy (else she would make an indifferent wife for a curate) a very Joseph Hume in petticoats. The features of Carry were good, and massive like her figure. Her complexion was florid ; her eyes gray, clear, piercing ; her air was that of a woman who was the mistress as well as the mother of a family. If there was a *soupçon* of severity, or rather combativeness, in her physiognomy, it was the result of her position in life, which had its own difficulties, and required a woman with more than a woman's spirit to meet and conquer them.

The little pair of sky-blues contained in themselves the history of a curate's wife. They had been the Sunday dress of each of her three boys in succession, according as each had attained the period when she thought proper to promote him from petticoats. Three times had they been altered, reduced, repaired, and turned with her own hands. When the first out-grew them, they descended to the second; and when the second burst through them, Carry repaired the breach, and they were handed down to the third. The congregation of Redcross church was as familiar with that pair of trousers as with the cassock of the curate himself, and astonishing it was how well they held out, and how well they looked, after so many transformations.

Twice she was positive she heard the desired step; twice she was disappointed; it was either the wind in the branches of the tall mountain-ash on the right of the hall-door, or the pigs in the yard, or one of the villagers also belated. At length,

however, she caught the true unmistakeable steady, dogged, homeward trot of the pony; and in less than five minutes the bell that communicated between the outer gate (for there was a walled court in front of the house) and the kitchen announced the return of the curate to all his household. His servants adored him. He had three, two maids, and something between a man and boy, called Peter, who was groom, gardener, footman, and butler; at least, if he was not the butler, the curate had no other. Peter had been brought up by his mistress, and stood in great awe of her, but he was always the same giddy illogical fellow, and neither Carry's ratings, or his master's cudgelings, did much to mend him. When the court-yard bell rang at night, Peter always ran to open it with the kitchen candle, although there was a lantern expressly for the purpose. There was no use in lecturing or licking him. It was in his Celtic blood never to make the proper use of any thing. When there was the least wind, the candle of course

was blown out, directly the house-door was opened, although the provoking Peter did his best to make a lantern of it with one of his hands. Then he invariably gave the wind a sub-audible malediction for "laving him in the dark," as if the wind was to blame; and registered an oath in the same key that the house was "the windiest house he ever see'd in all his born days."

Yes!—Peter was a very provoking fellow; but then there flowed, united in his veins, two streams of the purest Celtic blood; his father was a Hogg, and his mother a M'Swyne, so that race had probably something to do with it.

Carry never could run very fast, but, as fast as she could run, she ran to meet and embrace her husband as he stumbled into the room, having been, as usual, obliged to grope his way from the court-yard gate to the door of his study.

"Dear Hercules!" she exclaimed, throwing her large loving arms about him; and right conjugally did the stout curate return

the greeting. This done, he hung up his hat on one of the prongs of the hay-fork, and threw himself down, not on a chair, but on a seedy old black leathern trunk, covered all over with torn labels, figures, and directions, and used (when not upon foreign service) for holding all sorts of things, which nobody else would have thought of stowing in such a receptacle.

"All well at the rectory?" inquired Carry.

"All well," he replied, unbuttoning his enormous outside coat, which was none of your modern paletots, but more of a Boreas than a Zephyr, and throwing it plump down on the cradle.

Carry jumped up with a scream; and it was truly marvellous that the little sleeper was not crushed into a pancake. However, it was not so much as awakened, which made the distressed mother think for a moment that her awkward husband had committed infanticide.

"Who could have thought the baby was there?" he exclaimed, in his own defence.

"The cradle is not a very extraordinary place for a baby," rejoined Carry, a little sharply.

"But in the study, I mean," said Hercules.

The notion of any thing being out of place in Mr. Woodward's study was a pleasant one! Probably, however, that subject had been exhausted, for Carry made no remark, but asked her husband would he take tea.

Notwithstanding the six cups he had taken at the rectory, Mr. Woodward acquiesced with readiness, and Peter was ordered to make the necessary preparations; which he at length accomplished, after making about ten journeys backwards and forwards between kitchen and parlour; when one journey would have sufficed, with a grain of forethought, or thought of any kind. Carry was tired of being provoked with him, and sat working at the little blue inexpressibles, raising her eyes now and then to observe Peter's movements, and call her husband's attention to the wonderful amount of unnecessary trouble he was giving himself.

"Upon my word," said the curate, as his man left the room for the last time, "I think the charge of laziness so often brought against Irish servants is a most unwarrantable one."

"At all events," said Carry, "if they do hate trouble, they are the most self-sacrificing people in the world, for they never spare themselves any." And, so saying, she rose to make tea.

"Now am I as happy as a bishop over his Burgundy," cried the good curate, rejoicing in his wife, his home, and his turf-fire, and extending his immense limbs towards the flaming mountain on the hearth.

"Are bishops always drinking Burgundy?" asked Carry, "for I never read a speech or an article about the church but I find bishops and Burgundy always mentioned together."

"Just because they begin the same letter," said her husband; "bishop and Burgundy, curate and Congo."

"I don't expect ever to see *you* a bishop,

Hercules," said his wife, pouring out the second cup.

"I should not be a jot happier than I am, were I the primate," he replied; "but, Carry, I sometimes think I am a bishop; *you* are my bonny bishopric, I am bishop of Carolina;" and he rose and kissed her while she was dropping the sugar into his tea.

"You can't say, then, you have not got a fat diocese," she answered, with a smile that seemed the over-flowing of a well of warmth and light within her.

"I wouldn't take Canterbury in exchange," said Hercules; "but I honestly confess, Carry, my dear, I should have no objection, for the sake of my wife and my children, to hold a good living *in commendam*."

"If it ever comes," she replied, with a good-humoured little sigh—a sigh without a tincture of melancholy in it, "I hope we shall be thankful and enjoy it wisely; we are very happy, poor as we are, and I trust we

shall not be less so, if we are ever better off in the world ;—I am not impatient for promotion, I assure you, Hercules."

"How much happier we are than your brother, for instance, with one of the best benefices in the north of Ireland ;—but Val was not so lucky in *his* bishopric as I was, Carry."

"Oh," said Carry, with feeling, "there is a great deal in my brother's situation that makes me seriously uneasy on his account ; not merely his wife, though, Heaven knows, she is quite vexation enough for any poor man."

"I am going over to him in the morning," said the curate, "to consult with him about something he is anxious about,—I dare say it is about Sydney."

Carry was vexed to hear that her husband purposed to tramp over the hills again so very soon, but she was too much interested in her brother's concerns to make much work about it.

"Did you see Sydney?" she inquired.

Her husband mentioned how uncivilly he

had been received by his nephew, on account of his interference to have the voyage of pleasnre postponed.

"Graceless boy," cried his aunt,—"but what else is to be expected from the companion of Dudley Dawson? If my brother is thinking of sending Sydney to Cambridge, I trust, Hercules, you won't oppose it."

"Indeed, Carry, I think it would be much wiser in Val to send him to Trinity College, Dublin."

"As to the relative merits of Colleges," said Carry, "I am not qualified to give an opinion; but the further Sydney is removed from his present associates the better,—there cannot be a doubt of that."

"I don't think as ill of Dudley Dawson as you do, Carry. I think you are all too hard on him; your sister-in-law dislikes him because his father is a tithe-defaulter—why that's no fault of Dudley's; the girls object to him because he smokes cigars and talks a little too loud, as perhaps I do myself; and you, my dear—"

"As to me," said Carry, warmly, "I dislike him for every reason that could make me dislike a young man—he is designing, vulgar, dissipated—"

"No, Carry, not exactly dissipated,—only a little wild. Recollect the life his father led, and how Dudley's education was neglected."

"But that is no reason why he should be suffered to corrupt my nephew."

"Corrupt is too strong a word, Carry."

"Corrupt his morals, and brutalise his manners, for he is doing both," continued his wife with an earnestness well justified, as we shall soon see, by the real state of the case.

"I shall never forget how he assisted me that night last October, when the two fishing-smacks were capsized in the upper part of Loch Erne," said Hercules; "he behaved like a hero. Between us, we saved the lives of three men and a boy, and only for Dawson, two of them at least would have perished."

"It was very brave, no doubt, and very meritorious," said Carry, folding up the blue trousers, as it was growing late, "but a brave man may be very bad company; and I have no notion of Mr. Dudley Dawson, on the strength of any exploit of the kind, gaining a footing in my brother's family, and even presuming to inflict his attentions on one of his daughters."

This was the first the curate had heard upon this subject.

"Well, Carry, my dear," he rejoined, "you will say I am a great deal too tolerant, but I don't think it's a crime in any man to admire Elizabeth; and if it is a presumption (as I don't say it is not), why so much the worse for himself, and he is more to be pitied than blamed in my humble opinion."

"You *are* too tolerant, my dear, very many degrees," said Carry, rising to light her bed-room candle.

"Recollect," said the curate, rising also, "a certain personage is not so black as he is painted."

"But he is quite black enough, notwithstanding," rejoined his wife, retiring, having had the last word in this amicable though warm discussion, so womanly was she in all points. She did not go to bed, however, until she saw that all was still in her son's dormitory, and that Peter in his giddiness had taken no measures for burning down the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAD EDUCATION AND BAD COMPANY.

"Instruct your son well yourself, or others will instruct him ill for you. No child goes altogether untaught. Send him to the school of Wisdom, or he will go of himself to the rival academy, kept by the lady with the cap and bells. There is always teaching going on of some sort, just as in fields vegetation is never idle."

ESSAY ON MENTAL TILLAGE.

SYDNEY was the principal sufferer by the loss of his mother, his father's weaknesses, and the lax domestic system which grew up out of those causes combined. The mind of the young man had not been left wholly uninstructed, but the formation of his character had been neglected deplorably. The good, easy rector, being an elegant scholar, fancied that, with the occasional aid of a resident tutor, he could bring up his son very well at home; where he would also

have the benefit of his sisters' governesses for the acquisition of modern languages, and the other things taught, and perhaps taught best by women. As the boy was quick, if not docile, this plan succeeded well enough for a time, as far as mere learning was concerned; but in other respects it wofully miscarried. Sydney made no intellectual progress which was not more than counterbalanced by the absence of that controul which his disposition and temper particularly stood in need of. A too short interregnum of the sensible and energetic Mrs. Woodward's administration (just before his father's second marriage), was the only period of his childhood in which he had been kept in any thing like restraint, or known what discipline was, even in its mildest form. The consequence was, that he grew up, acquiring the metres of Horace, and the names of the Muses, but contracting bad habits in profusion. For one hour spent in his father's library, or his sisters' society, he passed six with grooms, game-keepers, boatmen, or with men who kept such refined and improving

company. Associations like these rapidly uncivilised him; he grew boorish in his manners, boisterous in conversation when he was not moodily silent, violent when crossed in any scheme of self-indulgence; and it was only the slight influence, which we have already said, that his sister Elizabeth managed to acquire, that restrained him from continual displays of his overbearing temper, even in the presence of his father, the mildest and most equable of men.

His step-mother had the common fault of step-mothers, which (contrary to the vulgar opinion) is not nearly so much undue severity, as the far worse extreme of neglect and indifference. Even before she fell into her present state of health, she took no pains at all with her husband's children, and never interfered with their management, except in the most absurd and mischievous manner. Indeed, with respect to Sydney, she encouraged his faults in the beginning of her acquaintance with him, and subsequently, when they came to be too offensive and troublesome, she pursued a system equally

reprehensible, licensing his absences from home, whenever, upon one pretence or another, he asked permission to join the companions of his riotous pleasures, sometimes for several days together.

It is a great mistake to say that the good points of a character redeem the bad ones, even when the former predominate decidedly. On the contrary, a single uncorrected fault will often make a whole career vicious, notwithstanding a multitude of qualities tending of themselves in the direction of honour and virtue. Sydney Spenser had his good points; he could do a brave and generous thing occasionally. He was popular with the poor in the neighbourhood, not merely because he was athletic and enterprising, but because he was really capable of kind actions, and when he had a little money to command, would bestow it on an object of charity, instead of his selfish gratification, if the former chanced to come first in his way. With his companions his propensity was to be lavish, as far as his means went. His guns, dogs, ponys, his boats, and even his clothes, were at the

absolute disposal of his favourites, and some of them were by no means backward to profit by his munificence. Sometimes he showed his generosity by being as ready to take as to give; in fact, he had established a sort of communism with several young men of his own age and tastes, the principal and the most objectionable of whom was Mr. Dawson, about whom the curate and his wife differed in opinion so much.

Dawson (whose career, not only as a private but as a public man, is destined to form an important part of our history) was a few years older than Sydney Spenser, but much in advance of him in a vicious acquaintance with the world. He was the son of an embarrassed man, and lived himself from hand to mouth, making the state of his father's affairs the excuse for his own irregularities, while in reality he was running the same dissolute rig which had reduced the once-considerable property of the family to almost nothing. He led a kind of oscillating life between Donegal and London, appearing and disappearing suspiciously; but he had

always some plausible account to give of himself, and few people knew either how handsomely in debt he was, or to what ingenious resorts he was now and then driven by his financial difficulties. In fact, just at the present period, matters were going so very ill with him, that he was seriously thinking of turning patriot and getting into Parliament; the time being exceedingly propitious for the advancement, in that line, of men of his stamp and character. However, it was not altogether necessity that suggested this high flight, for he was not destitute of vulgar ambition, any more than he was deficient in personal vanity, a quality which indeed he possessed in an inordinate degree. His family was respectable (though not as good blood as the Howards and Plantagenets), and he might have moved in good society, had his tastes been different; but he loved low company, and his manners and personal appearance soon became insuperable obstacles to his social reformation. On every return from London (where his conduct was under least

restraint), he fell a step lower in the scale; and, as is usually remarked in such cases, he was particularly offensive when he aimed at being particularly polished and well-bred.

Such was the rising young politician, whose rude eye having been captivated by the rector's second daughter, was now daringly, though not avowedly, aspiring to her hand; hoping, by means of his league with her brother, to gain a footing in the family, and confidently relying upon his personal merits, estimated by his enormous self-conceit, to carry all before him afterwards.

None of the Spenser family had a notion, at the point of time from which we start in these domestic memoirs, either of the extent of Dawson's presumption with respect to Elizabeth, or that Sydney was involved as much as in truth he was with so dangerous an associate. Dawson was in the habit of advancing him small sums of money, to enable him to purchase articles which he took a boyish fancy for, and had not the means of procuring for himself. For the

possession of these things he would account, when any account was required, by stating that they were either loans or presents. Nor was this the worst. Sydney had learned to contract little clandestine debts in other quarters also; and independently of his liabilities to Dawson, he was now in the books of country shopkeepers to the extent of near fifty pounds, a serious amount of debt to a youth of eighteen, who had not fifty pence in the world to discharge it.

"Sir," said Doctor Johnson, upon a certain occasion, "small debts are like small shot; they are rattling on every side, and can scarcely be escaped without a wound. Great debts are like cannon-balls, of loud noise, but little danger." The sequel will show how well the truth of this witty remark was illustrated in the case of Sydney Spenser.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSULTATION.

"He keeps his time, as punctual as the sun,
When rising he redeems the pledge he gave
The world at setting, and sent us to our couches
With strong assurance of another morrow.
Oh, Sir, the sun himself is not more faithful
Than strenuous friendship; nor the solar beams
More full of warmth and comfort."

NEW PLAY.

THE following morning verified Mr. Woodward's predictions to the letter. The sun rose red with choler, the sky was surly and foul; the mountains were shrouded with mists, so that only the outline of their summits was discernible, and that only at intervals, when the wind, which came in sullen fits, dispersed for an instant the accumulated vapours. The gulls and cormorants, retreating from the ocean, like refugees from an

impending revolution, flew screaming over the loch to their wonted asylums in the inland valleys. Before the family assembled, it was evidently preparing to blow great guns; the gale moaned and howled in the chimneys, and the waves were dashing over the little strand at the foot of the lawn, and swinging the cutter to and fro so rudely as to extort even from the fool-hardy Sydney himself a surly admission that the weather was unsuitable for aquatic amusements. But the curate had made an appointment with his brother-in-law, and no weather that ever "came out of the sky," as the Irish peasant expresses it, would have prevented him from keeping it. When Hercules set out, "on a raw and gusty day," upon one of his prodigious walks, with his huge dreadnought of dark blue frieze, his oiled-skin hat, and a great crooked club in his fist, it was not easy for a stranger to make out who or what he was—whether a farmer, or a pilot, a fisherman, or a mountain shepherd; indeed, he sometimes looked like a man who lived

both by hook and by crook, as the saying is. At some distance,—particularly when he was encountered on a bleak moor, or upon the crags,—he seemed a very desperate character, and made your heart sink within you; but when people were near enough to see him well, distrust vanished, and they felt that it was no small degree of personal security to keep in his company, or within the protectorship of his arm. The police of the country had often found him a valuable ally, for being a puissant pedestrian (notwithstanding the possession of so capital a pony), he was intimately acquainted with every recess in the mountains, every cavern on the shore, every house, castle, ruin, almost every rock and tree, within a circle of forty miles round the village of Redcross; and for the capture of a smuggler, or any description of lawless character, not a constable in the north had half of the Rev. Mr. Woodward's reputation. His acquaintance with persons, too, was co-extensive with his knowledge of localities; he knew everybody

all through and round the country, gentle and simple; and there were few to whom he had not done some strenuous kindness. He had saved dozens of lives in shipwreck; and, possessing a certain smattering of physic and surgery, he had cured many a wrinkled crone of her rheumatism or her toothache. Not a blue jacket on the coast but would have died for him; and the old women in red cloaks and blue petticoats, when they could not keep up with him on foot, pursued him with benisons until he was out of sight.

With all Mr. Spenser's knowledge of his curate's hardy habits and character, he was not a little surprised on coming down to breakfast that morning to meet him in the hall, just arrived. He was dripping like a water-dog, and spattered above his knees with the yellow clay of the hills; but he cared little or nothing about it, and was also Provokingly thoughtless of the damage he did the floors and carpets by such a needless importation of mud and moisture.

Mr. Spenser induced him to divest him-

self of his drenched outer-garment, and had less difficulty to make him sit down and eat a breakfast fully proportioned to his size and brawn. All curates are prodigious breakfast-eaters ; the reason probably is that they are not always confident of dinner ;—more shame upon the system that deprives them of what ought to be the well-grounded faith of every honest hard-working man in every path of life. But Hercules had taken a walk that morning, enough to make any man's appetite wolfish.

"I think, Val," he acknowledged, "I have played the wolf to that cold shoulder of lamb."

"Quite right," said the rector, smiling; "and now play the fox to that cold fowl, I advise you;" and no second invitation was required. Not a fox in the shire could have disposed in much shorter time of two legs and one wing of the fat capon in question. He scarcely spoke a word to his nieces during the meal, except to give Elizabeth a parcel of loves from her aunt, in a kind of parenthesis between an egg and a cup of tea.

"Now I am your man," he cried, having at length concluded his labours, and rising from the table, with a droll lingering look at the little that survived the havoc, as if it was scarcely worth while to leave it, and yet impossible to do more than he had done.

"Well, Val, you want to talk to me about Sydney?"

Sydney had not appeared at breakfast, but that was too common an incident to occasion a remark from any body.

"I do. Let us adjourn to the library." They did so. Mr. Spenser seated himself in his own green leather chair; Mr. Woodward preferred striding up and down the room, often visibly agitating his friend for the safety of a bust of Curran and some small groups of statuary—things easily overset by the knock of an awkward elbow or the switch of a coat-tail. The curate was a dangerous person in a drawing-room, or wherever there happened to be any fragile articles of *vertu*.

"Hercules," said the rector, "now that the time draws near when Sydney's university

education ought to commence, it is time to discuss the question, to what university we ought to send him. Let me at once tell you that Mrs. Spenser—"

The curate made an impatient gesture, as much as to say, "What the —— has Mrs. Spenser to do in a matter of the kind?" The rector continued—

"Mrs. Spenser is decidedly for either Oxford or Cambridge."

"Oxford!" muttered Hercules, contemptuously, and, had he not been interrupted, would have proceeded to express the same scorn for the other university.

"I myself," continued Mr. Spenser, "lean to Cambridge,—as I was a Cantab, you will understand my feeling,—but I wish to do nothing rashly; I desire to combine a due regard to my own circumstances with the best course for Sydney's future interests."

"Why talk, then, of Oxford and Cambridge—of either one or the other—when you have Trinity College, Dublin, where your son would get twice as sound, twice as cheap, and twice as moral an education as it

is possible to get any where else in the world. Since you have asked my opinion, Val, here it is frankly for you. Send the boy up to Dublin—'you may go further and fare worse,' as Father O'Leary said to the Protestant bishop who was abusing Purgatory. Send him, I say, to the college of Swift, Burke, Goldsmith, and your favourites, Grattan and John Philpot Curran. There, put him under the tuition of my cousin, Tom Beamish,—and I'll answer for it, Val, you'll never repent it."

"So far," said the rector, having listened in the calmest manner to this speech, which was delivered quite in any thing but a calm way, "so far I anticipated the opinion you would give; but—"

The curate was on his hobby, and took the word out of his brother-in-law's mouth without scruple.

"I'll show you all the advantages, Val, *seriatim*. First, the economy—"

"I grant the economy," said Mr. Spenser.

"In the second place, Val,—indeed I should have put this first,—comes the moral

consideration. Now there Dublin bangs Oxford and Cambridge hollow. It was founded by the Maiden Queen, remember that, Val. No vice in old Trinity. Not a man there knows a game-cock from an ostrich; no horses dogs, or curricles. Smash a few lamps, and thrash a sleepy old Dogberry, once a-year, that's all—an old usage, only at the feast of the *Sanctæ et individuæ Trinitatis*—no great profligacy in that."

Mr. Spenser smiled at the curate's notions of honouring the Trinity, and, without disputing the positions of the enthusiastic Hercules, said, that he was so far from underrating the moral view of the question, that he considered it far the most important point of all.

"But," he continued, "I cannot disguise from myself, that Sydney has formed some unfortunate connexions in Ireland, which, not exactly prejudicial to his morals, certainly are so to his manners. These connexions I am desirous to break off as speedily and as completely as possible, and I see no way so

likely to answer the purpose as to send him to an English university, where the company I allude to could not possibly follow him."

"He may get into worse," interrupted the curate. "The worst I know about the Dawsons (for I know you allude particularly to them) is, that they have not paid you the tithes they owe."

"That objection will soon be removed, I am happy to tell you," said Mr. Spenser. "Read this," and he handed the curate the following letter, which we insert, because it may help to throw a light upon the character of the writer.

"Castle Dawson, July —, 183—.

"My dear Sir,

"I trust I need not assure you what pain it has given me, that owing to the embarrassed state of my unfortunate father's affairs, the tithes due to you from the Castle Dawson property have remained so long unsettled. Had my feelings been regarded, or my urgent solicitations been attended to, your claims would have had the priority to those of

any other creditor ; but my father, being a confirmed absentee (not altogether indeed a voluntary one), is of course uninfluenced by the profound sentiments of respect and admiration which every resident in this parish must entertain for the most excellent clergyman, and (let me say, without flattery) the most useful country gentleman in Ireland. But my present object in addressing you is merely to say, that I have at length succeeded in making arrangements for the full and immediate discharge of the arrears so long unhappily due from this estate. I have given notice to this effect to Mr. Maguire, your proctor, that he may come over here on some early day and receive the amount.

" Please to present my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Spenser, whose health I trust will improve as the summer advances, and believe me,

" My dear Sir, yours,

" With the most sincere admiration and respect,

" Dudley Dawson.

" To the Rev. Valentine Spenser,
" Redcross Rectory, Redcross."

"Now, there!" cried Hercules, with some triumph, "that's what I call the letter of a brave, honest fellow."

"A little too sweet, methinks," said the rector.

"Come, Val, that's a good letter, and an honest letter; if there's a little too much of the *suaviter in modo*, there's the *fortiter in re* along with it. My firm belief is, that you would never have got one farthing of those tithes but for the personal influence and exertions of Dudley. He might as well have left the sweetness *out*, but since he has put the money *in*, I am not disposed to be hard on him."

"But to return to our subject," said Mr. Spenser, "I was going to observe that vicious pleasures are expensive ones, and that my income is not large enough to enable me to make Sydney such an allowance as would give him the means of indulging in pleasures of that description. Moreover, Sydney, though wild and wilful, has no actual vices that I have

observed, or heard of. He has been brought up, you know, under my own eye."

"Under your *eye*, Val," said the curate, "but not under your *hand;* and as to the limited allowance which you say is all you can make him, that seems to me to be only an additional source of danger, adding debt and improbity to dissipation, supposing him to fall into bad company, which, as he has done here under your own roof, he is at least as likely to do when some hundred miles away from you."

"There is a great deal, I admit, in what you say," said Mr. Spenser, yieldingly.

Hercules pushed his success with uncouth energy, swinging his arms about, and raising his voice painfully.

"Send him to Dublin—I'll go up myself with him—Tom Beamish is the best fellow and best friend I have in the world. All the vacations will be spent here with you—make him a pensioner—he will get a scholarship if he minds himself—think of that, Val. I'll tell you what a scholarship did for me :—I

had chambers, Val, books on the buttery, exhibitions—twenty pounds a year, think of that, Val. The college paid me instead of my paying the college—I had a vote for the member—"

"Yes, and you voted against my friend Plunket, I'll answer for it—ah, Hercules?"

"Yes, that I did," cried the sturdy Woodward, elate at the memory of the conscientious opposition he had given to the greatest orator of his age, and brightest ornament of his country; "but the best of all is yet to come. I had commons—dinner, you know, dinner, Val—roast leg of mutton and boiled leg of mutton alternately every day of my life for five years — take your pen and calculate how many legs that was in all—in fact, Val, five years' maintenance in the Prytaneum, like Themistocles or Xenophon."

"I was not aware that Themistocles or Xenophon received that honour," said Mr. Spenser, quietly. Mr. Spenser had no great respect for the scholarship of his curate, which, indeed, was not very elegant or exact.

"Can you prove that they did not?" demanded the curate. "And, at all events, Val, if they did not, you can't deny that they deserved it."

"That's another matter," said the rector. "But there is a great deal in all that you have said on the college question, and I will turn it carefully over in my mind, Hercules, you may depend upon it."

"What's the use, Val, of turning it over in your mind? Let me write to Tom Beamish by this post," said the impetuous curate.

"Not quite so fast," said the rector, smiling as he rose.

The curate rose also, and took his leave; not, however, without a sanguine hope that the enumeration of the legs of mutton had carried the day hollow in favour of his own *Alma Mater*.

CHAPTER X.

STORMS WITHIN AND WITHOUT.

"L'homme propose; Dieu dispose."
FRENCH PROVERB.

THE rector's library was a handsome and spacious semicircular room, fitted up with bookcases of black oak, exquisitely carved, and polished like ebony, containing from two to three thousand volumes, the best editions of the best works in the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and English languages, the majority superbly bound, for books were the only thing in which Mr. Spenser's personal tastes were luxurious and expensive. He was a bookish man, but not so much a glutton as an epicure in books, and he held that when a work was "glorious within," it was only fit that the "clothing" should be rich in propor-

tion. A taste in bookbinding is essentially a masculine one. No woman has a tincture of it. Women read, and women write books, and often beautiful books, but taste in binding books they have none. It is one of the few elegant things the sex has no gust for. The binding of a robe or a bonnet they comprehend; but the distinctions, proprieties, and niceties of russia, morocco, and vellum,—where to gild and not to gild, where to be severe and where to be splendid, what authors and what editions to dress in plain attire, what to clothe in richer garb, what to array imperially in gold and purple,—not even your bookish woman has a notion of. Many are, indeed, of opinion that books look best, as ladies often do themselves, *en dishabille*. Bookbinding is twice an art; it is more than the craft of the tradesman, it is part of the study of the scholar, for even in literature it is vain to affect a total indifference to externals. A library is a noble thing, and a taste in books is the politest of tastes. As we love them, we love to embellish and exalt them; the

fountains of our purest pleasures, it seems but grateful to deck them with marble and surround them with flowers.

The rector was a thoughtful, exact, careful, and, therefore, a slow writer, no pilferer from Barrow or Massillon, nor one of your mechanical preachers, who take what is called a skeleton discourse, and stuff it with unconnected texts, with the assistance of "Cruden's Concordance." Mr. Spenser, indeed, took remarkable pains with his sermons; his congregation was not a large one, but it consisted chiefly of the lower classes, to whom, as to children, it is most important that instruction should be conveyed with that perfect clearness and simplicity, which in composition is the summit of art. His curate, however, was of a different opinion. Hercules Woodward thought an *ex tempore* the proper thing for the Protestant shopkeepers and policemen. He roared and bellowed in the pulpit; frightened and bullied his congregation; thumped things into them, and thumped things out of them, and thumped a great deal of dust out of the cushion into

the bargain. He was a little addicted to coarseness, too, in his language, particularly when he made a personal attack upon Satan, which he often did, or upon the Pope, which he only ventured to do in Mr. Spenser's absence. But he was an earnest, good man, not more resembling Luther, in the vehemence of his manner, than Melancthon, in the mildness and benignity that were under the surface.

"Now," said the rector to himself, when his brother-in-law had taken his leave, to trudge back again to that sweet home, to which the reader has already been introduced, "Now," said the rector, "I shall sit down and write my sermon."

Scarce was he seated in his green-leather arm-chair before his library table, preparing his mind for heavenly thoughts, and tuning his tongue to express them in appropriate language, when a rapid running and trampling overhead (my lady's chamber was over the library) and a violent jangling of bells—well-known signals of distress—called him

upstairs abruptly. He was used to such disturbances, and bore them only too stoically.

Can you imagine a woman at once handsome and ghastly? Mrs. Spenser's features were good; the complexion actually deathlike; her eyes were black, and brighter than was necessary or agreeable. You would not call her face emaciated, but it was so exceedingly pale, or rather pallid, that she looked more like a person escaped from a cemetery than on the way to it. There was, however, no want of vitality about her: just the reverse: she was only too lively, but it was a liveliness the very reverse of pleasant, the animation of selfishness and irritability. A woman more full of whims, whimsies, humours, crotchets, prejudices, envies, jealousies, paltrinesses, pettinesses, peevishnesses, narrownesses, and little miseries, caprices, suspicions, and apprehensions of all sorts, never existed; and she was ruthless in inflicting them on every one about her, particularly, of course, upon her *devoted* husband. Mrs. Spenser was considerate to only one thing in the world, and that was a

black-faced pug, who was lying at this moment at her feet, coiled up in a ball, with a collar of red velvet round his neck, embroidered with the name of "*Bijou.*"

"Calm yourself, Margaret, pray do," said her husband, in a tone of earnest tenderness, approaching the bed-side, where Rebecca, her maid, looking frightened and fluttered, was standing all alert, with opiates, salts, tonics, and many more things than she could well hold in her hands, not knowing what might be first called for. Rebecca's face could almost spare a few roses, and presented a lively contrast to Mrs. Spenser's, which resembled that of a bust in white marble, with two real eyes of unearthly lustre glittering in it.

"Calm yourself, Margaret," repeated the rector, "pray do not make yourself uneasy about the chimneys; they have been recently examined by the diocesan architect; believe me they are perfectly secure."

"Secure, indeed!" she cried; those unnatural eyes glancing back and forwards between the ceiling and the window, as if she

was in instant expectation of seeing the chimney topple down, or Boreas making his appearance in person. "Secure, indeed! as if any thing could be secure in such a terrific storm!"

Then she asked whether there was such another climate on the globe, and said she could stand any thing—any thing but storm; then she was confident the windows would be blown in the very next gust that came; after which she affirmed that her head was splitting, and applied her long white fingers, not unlike icicles, to her temples, as if to keep the pieces together; and when her hands brought a mass of her hair down from underneath her night-cap, perhaps the luckless Rebecca did not come in for a little hurricane to her own share for her negligent pinning!

"Perhaps, my dear, you would be better up," resumed her husband, to make a diversion in the maid's favour; but instead of noticing what he said, she looked at her watch, and inquired pettishly for Miss M'Cracken. That

was the name of the nursery governess, not a very harmonious one, it will be admitted, but she was quite ready to part with it, and what could any girl with an unmusical name do more? Rebecca ran for her, but Miss M'Cracken was not to be found.

"Try the school-room," said the rector, with a *soupçon* of satire in the solemnity of his tone, implying that the room in question was not the most likely place to find the governess in; though it was not to be entirely omitted in a search for her.

It turned out that Lucy M'Cracken was at her toilette. Mrs. Spenser could not bear to have any one about her who was not at all hours nicely, almost elegantly, dressed. Few young women objected to her service on that account; not Miss M'Cracken, certainly.

While the governess was attiring, the rector again suggested to his wife the expediency of rising, at the same time repeating his assurances that the chimneys were as solid as any masonry could possibly be. Mrs. Spenser seemed to be measuring the

ceiling with her wild black eyes, and marking the precise spot where the chimney must inevitably smash through it, if the gale continued to rage. It certainly did blow furiously at the moment; close as the woodwork of the windows was, they rattled at every gust, and a tall ash in front of the house, that in general could not be seen from Mrs. Spenser's pillow, was more or less visible every minute, as it bowed under the weight of the blast.

"Perhaps so," she answered, in a tone of peevish acquiescence. "I'll get up and sit in my dressing-room; pray go down, Mr. Spenser, while I dress, — no — stay — the exertion would be too much for me—do you not think you and Rebecca could push the bed over to the other side of the room? My poor Bijou —he has been so restless all night—*soyez tranquille, pauvre petit.*"

Master and maid put their shoulders to it, Bijou growling at them the while wickedly. Rebecca was perhaps the robuster of the two, being more in the habit of exercising her

arms than her master, who made no great use of his, not even in the pulpit.

Before, however, they commenced moving the bedstead, which was a massive one, they should have thought of putting all impediments out of the way; but they neglected to do so, and the consequence was that they overturned a small table, with all the drops, salts, and tonics, a cup and saucer, a porcelain candlestick, a small silver bell, some French novels, Mrs. Spenser's watch, a china jug, a jar of red currant-jelly and a wine-glass, the simultaneous fall of which miscellaneous articles made a handsome crash, you may suppose.

Mrs. Spenser concluded it was the chimney at last, in spite of the diocesan architect, and sprang screaming out of bed with an agility that was perfectly marvellous, dragging half the bed-clothes after her; and worse, or rather better than all, pitching her ill-conditioned pug into the middle of the room, where he barked and snarled like a little Cerberus.

Mr. Spenser ran round on one side and

Rebecca on the other—it was a scene that Wilkie should have painted—the girls ran up stairs, hearing the din, and Miss M'Cracken, dressed *à quatre épingles*, followed by one of the housemaids, with a sweeping-brush in her hand, also rushed to the spot, to see what calamities had happened, and lend their assistance.

A glance would have told any body of the least skill in divining character, who saw Miss M'Cracken enter Mrs. Spenser's bedroom that morning, that she was a person of no little authority and consequence. She was under the middle stature, but made the utmost of her height ; her figure was at once neat and stout, and her dress set it off to the best advantage. Handsome she was unquestionably, but disagreeably so ; at least many people thought so. Her face was one of those you can't object to, and yet don't quite fancy ; it at once attracted and repelled you. In short, it was evident she had a *character* and a mind, while at the same time there was something sinister that bespoke a mind better

stored with shrewd projects than good principles. She had reached the mature and stirring age of twenty-seven, and looked as if she had commenced life early in her teens, and seen and done as much as it was possible to see and do in the time.

Every body except Miss Spenser gave way to Miss M'Cracken. She called for explanations, she issued orders, she inquired for the children, she seemed disposed to box Rebecca's ears, although she and Rebecca were generally good friends enough. To the rector alone she was respectful, but there was something condescending in her bearing even to him. Arabella, who did not restrain herself, said in a low but sharp tone, that it would be better for Miss M'Cracken not to talk so much, but to pick up the broken things. Lucy's colour mounted, and her eye showed her resentment at this speech, but she commanded her tongue perfectly. Rebecca was instantly on her knees, picking up the shattered glass and china; Elizabeth and the chambermaid assisted: it was too

grovelling an office for Miss M'Cracken, who occupied herself helping Mrs. Spenser into bed, and appeasing Bijou with Naples' biscuits. It is to be presumed she thought these latter employments more dignified.

Mr. Spenser was ridiculously out of his sphere amidst all the petticoats, blankets, and broken china, currant-jelly, and sal-volatile ; he felt it, and took the opportunity of the confusion to slip out of the room, picking the feathers from his glossy black coat as he went down stairs, and blaming himself internally for being so weak as to humour his wife's vagaries, a weakness, however, of which he continued to be guilty to the end of the chapter. His grand mistake was, forgetting that he had other duties as well as his conjugal ones ; he should have locked himself up in his study, if necessary stood a siege there, and written his pastoral discourse, in defiance of rain and wind, and all the nerves and nonsense in the universe.

Mrs. Spenser continued very excited for some time, unusually fidgety and exacting,

always wanting something, and changing her mind before her faithful attendant could get it for her. Lucy took up her position near a window, and applied herself to "Clarissa Harlowe," as well as she could, in the intervals of her attendance at the bedside. Never once did she exhibit the least temper, unpleasant as it is to be disturbed reading, particularly such a work as Lucy was engaged with; on the contrary, when the interest became very absorbing, she seemed only to grow more anxious for the comfort and repose of her patient; for she approached her on tip-toe, with a small vial containing a black liquid, and implored her to take a few drops of laudanum on a lump of sugar.

"How many will you take, madam?" she tenderly inquired, her voice as nicely pitched to the tone of a sick room as if she had been educated by Miss Martineau expressly on the point.

"Give me twelve, or thirteen," said Mrs. Spenser.

"Twelve will be quite enough, ma'am,"

said Lucy, but she administered twenty, and enjoyed Richardson's great work to the content of her heart.

At dinner that day Sydney was missing.

Mr. Spenser asked his daughter Elizabeth whether she knew what had become of him.

"He rode over, I believe, to Castle Dawson," she replied, in a tone that conveyed her displeasure at having no better account to give of her brother.

Mr. Spenser merely remarked that it was an unpleasant day for so long a ride. It was one instance out of a thousand of the parental negligence which caused him so much unhappiness hereafter; and yet Sydney was just now, as we have seen, occupying his mind more than he had ever done before, and more than subjects of direct practical interest usually did.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NURSERY GOVERNESS.

"A young lady is anxious for an engagement as Nursery Governess, or Companion. She is active, intelligent, amiable, and confidential; teaches English in all its branches, French like a native, and the rudiments of Latin. Has no objection to town, or country, or to the education of young gentlemen. Would make herself generally useful. Salary of *some* importance, and the family of a clergyman, or an invalid would be preferred. Address, L. M'C., Post Office, Kensington." THE TIMES, *Aug.* 3, 1830.

LUCY M'CRACKEN's ostensible employment in the family was not her real one; nominally she was the preceptress of the younger children; she professed the rudiments of Latin, and prepared young gentlemen not only for the studies of Eton, but for its discipline also. But her real and *bonâ-fide* occupation was that of sycophant to Mrs. Spenser. She had a fair salary for the former, but she made a better thing of the latter, not only in the shape of perquisites, but what she valued more, influ-

ence and position. Lucy had entered the rector's household a mere nursery-governess, bound by the terms of her engagement to do several things less dignified than teaching grammar and geography ; but she had gradually and cleverly shuffled off every function that was in any degree menial, and all that remained was, to shake off her educational duties altogether; an object which, about the present time, she had very nearly succeeded in accomplishing. A more ambitious or more artful young woman never advertised in the "Times" for a post in a nursery. Her grand object was to make herself a lady, and as that was only to be done by captivating and marrying a gentleman, she was always ready for a flirtation with any handsome young man who fell in her way. Beside the face and figure we have described, she had other qualities that made her by no means an undesirable girl to flirt with. She spoke French fluently, sang well, and there was something piquant in the alternate demureness and vivacity of her demeanour. Miss M'Cracken was

much too sagacious, to rely upon the advantages Nature had bestowed upon her. She perfectly understood the value of accomplishments and manners, and had omitted no opportunity of improving herself in both ways. Her manners, indeed, were already easy and graceful beyond her station; if they were embarrassed at all, it was not by the humble opinion she had of herself, but more by the trouble it gave her to disguise the high one. As to her mind, the pains she took with it would have deserved the highest praise, only that much of the time its cultivation occupied had been purloined from the discharge of her duties; she taught herself Italian when she ought to have been teaching her pupils Latin or English, and the books which she recommended for their use were invariably those which she desired to have for her own mental improvement. In fact, she had little, if any, of the organ of conscientiousness; or, if she originally possessed a conscience, she had contrived to reduce its voice to an almost inaudible tick, which it is quite

possible to do, if people will only resolutely and patiently set about it.

When Lucy came first to Redcross, she found Rebecca in the post of honour nearest to Mrs. Spenser's person. But Rebecca was a poor simple country-girl, without a notion above her sphere of life, and the sorry line of her duty. She was pliable and complaisant because she was obliging and good-natured, but she had no turn for flattery, knack at intrigue, or talent for self-advancement. Her prudence began and ended with depositing a few pounds in the Saving Bank of the village ; she was born and bred a servant, and a servant was destined to continue all her days, while every thing about Miss M'Cracken announced that if fortune had not a higher sphere in store for her, she was not the woman to sink with alacrity into a lower one. Lucy (who indeed hated children) soon conceived the idea that Rebecca would answer extremely well to superintend the fry of the nursery, while she felt that it would be more congenial to her own tastes and talents to pass the greater part of her time

in Mrs. Spenser's bed-chamber and boudoir, acquiring lady-like ways of talking and thinking, or doing nothing, and thus fitting herself to move in the walk of life which she had no doubt destiny had chalked out for her, and which, at all events, she had chalked out for herself.

The skill was consummate with which Miss M'Cracken contrived to change places with Rebecca. She began by making herself agreeable; then she made herself useful; and she ended by making herself as indispensable to Mrs. Spenser as her salts and morphine. Nominally, however, she still retained her original appointment; a few hours every day, generally in the morning, were devoted to the young Spensers, during which, by her severe rectitude and her despotic government, she compensated herself in some measure for the lax morality, and the servile behaviour of the remainder of the day.

Lucy had contemplated at one time (not long before the commencement of our story), making a little conquest of Sydney Spenser. She would gladly have put him on the list of

her pupils, and offered to read "Gil Blas" with him ; or be his Italian mistress, if he would prefer Petrarch's Sonnets. But Sydney had the bad taste to scorn Lucy's sentimental schooling ; he cared nothing for Petrarch, or for Laura either ; the beauty of a bull-dog was that which then had most power over him, and he had more ear for an Irish melody than a Tuscan. In short, he was as repulsive to Miss M'Cracken as St. Kevin was to Kathleen; but his coldness she could have brooked and forgiven, if he had only repelled her advances without ridiculing them, and if he had not gratuitously declared that Rebecca was in his opinion a handsomer girl. Lucy had no notion of being jealous, or quarrelling with Rebecca on the subject; but she became all at once a malignant though secret enemy to Sydney. None of his irregularities escaped her inquisitorial eye, and she had always a bad word for him whenever she could vent her feelings in safety.

Next to Sydney she disliked Elizabeth. She had no cause for it, only that Elizabeth showed a willingness to discharge the duties

which the proper officer neglected, and that her quiet dignity of manner kept the *soi-disant* governess at a lowering and provoking distance. Lucy had not half so much ill-will to Arabella, who openly attacked her, and sometimes gave her an opportunity for a "reply churlish," or "a counter-check quarrelsome." The "retort courteous" not often passed between them.

Miss M'Cracken, in short, was one of those people of whom there are many in the world, who are liked by hardly anybody, yet of whom nobody can easily find any thing decidedly bad to say. Mrs. Spenser, however, more than liked her, and with very good reason, for Lucy's main business from morning to night was to flatter and humour her; the latter being a much more arduous task than the former, with so capricious and whimsical a woman. Lucy possessed the art of always divining what her mistress wished her to say, or not to say; knew when to congratulate her upon looking charming, or pronounce her looking wretched, which was sometimes the more agreeable compliment; when to

coincide with the doctors, when to differ with them; when to be mute as a mouse, when to speak; and what to say when she did speak. To a selfish invalid such an ally was invaluable. Lucy was always ready with the most acceptable suggestions, and of course it was no concern of hers whether the rector could well afford to act upon them or not; she was not his Chancellor of Exchequer; her business was to consult poor Mrs. Spenser's health and gratification, and nobody could accuse that lady of reckless extravagance, or of thinking of herself to the exclusion of every body, and every thing else, when the ideas seemed to originate in the amiable thoughtfulness and inventive good-nature of the governess.

Privations, discomforts, and indignities, are the lot of hundreds of young women who devote themselves, or are devoted by their ruthless destiny, to that line of life which the world in its wisdom (or at least a great portion of it) continues to treat as one of the basest of human employments—the education of in-

fancy. But Miss M'Cracken was not the girl to put up with privations or indignities. She knew how to feather her nest, and to butter her bread on both sides, as they say in Swift's "Polite Conversation." Not to speak in proverbs, she possessed the art of making herself snug wherever her lot cast her; and there was scarcely a prettier room in the parsonage than that which she had appropriated to herself. It was handsomely curtained, warmly carpeted, more than comfortably furnished, and, better than all, it was as remote as the extent of the house permitted, not only from the school-room, but from the children's dormitory. In the house the Woodwards lived in, there was no chamber half so well appointed, not even Carry's own, though Hercules did his best to make that comfortable.

Miss M'Cracken's room had the advantage of enjoying the overflow of luxuries and ornaments from Mrs. Spenser's. The rector's wife was particularly whimsical and extravagant in couches and chairs, and as her chamber could

not hold all the varieties her caprice had accumulated, when the inconvenience of a glut was felt, the excess was carried elsewhere, and Lucy was so obliging as to allow a portion of it to be stowed in her own apartment. In the same way she managed to decorate it with a handsome French clock, a buhl cabinet, a mosaic octagon table, and many other like articles, which she wished perhaps to make herself familiar with early in life, lest the possession of them might embarrass or overexcite her at a later period. But many little things in the room and the greater part of the books and prints were her own private chattels. Miss M'Cracken was always acquiring something, and never lost any thing she acquired. She rolled through life like a hedgehog through an orchard, gathering as she went, and probably, as in the case of the prickly and predatory animal, many things stuck to her which were not properly her own. Over the mantel-piece were hung, in little gilt or maple-wood frames, engravings of some of the most eminent Protestant mis-

sionaries, preachers, and theologians, interspersed with portraits of several women of celebrated piety, who were, of course, understood to be the female models which Lucy proposed for her study and imitation.

Need it be said that the books were of the same spiritual character. There was a neat little bookcase, well furnished with small editions of the most popular and standard religious works; a few belonged to Mr. Spenser, but the majority had been either bought by Lucy herself, or were presents which she had received from time to time from attached pupils or grateful mothers. Mr. Woodward had given her at Christmas a copy of Wilberforce's "View of Christianity," and the rector had very lately presented her with "Butler's Analogy," a proof of the high opinion he entertained of the powers of her understanding. It often gave him sincere pleasure to find her deeply engaged in its profound pages, while she kept watch and ward at his wife's bedside; for Lucy's novel-reading was generally a clandestine pursuit,

which, no doubt, gave an additional piquancy to the scenes of Richardson and Sand.

Very little sleep sufficed Lucy herself, particularly when she had such a book as "Clarissa" to keep her eyes open. It was well for Mrs. Spenser that the stock of novels and romances in the house was limited, for the volumes might have been counted by the phials of morphine administered to her, while Lucy devoured them. That night the dose was doubled, partly because the winds were so mutinous, and partly because Richardson was so absorbing. Long after all the house was under canopies of chintz or dimity, Lucy continued to sit up, with her wax candle, her lively little fire chirping in the grate, her person fused into the swelling cushions of a chair which was all cushions, her feet planted on the fender, her elbow on the table, her eyes riveted on "Clarissa," and taking no notice whatever of either Hannah More, or Mrs. Fry, who were both peering primly at her out of their little frames.

Somebody tapped at the door; she started, though not at all superstitious, listened, threw her handkerchief over the book, and said, "Come in." It was Rebecca, who, kept awake by the tempest, came to pass the night with Lucy, either in her bed, or at her fire-side. Lucy was charitable; drew over another chair, nearly as easy as her own, though made on another principle; planted her shivering deputy in it; and replenished the grate with sods, almost as sable, solid, and full of flame as Newcastle coal. There were soon two pair of feet on the fender, but there was a great difference between them; Lucy's were pretty, and wore silk stockings; Rebecca's were clothed in cotton, or worsted, and deserved no better.

"You hear the storm here mighty little, miss," said Rebecca, "it's mighty loud in the nursery."

"It's because the wind happens to blow from the west," said Lucy.

The fact was, that the wind blew from that

point three hundred days out of the three hundred and sixty-five, so that it was very commodious to have a bed-room that was not exposed to the west wind.

"What's a tempest, miss?" asked the deputy-governess, "though I'm sure I ought to know, living in these parts, where it never stops blowing all the year round."

Lucy smiled at the philosophical curiosity of Rebecca, and luminously explained that when the air was agitated, and tumbled things down, blew them about, and turned every thing topsy-turvy, that was a tempest.

"And what's a hurricane?"—was Rebecca's next inquiry.

Lucy again explained, and asked what made her companion so inquisitive that night.

"It was the children that were axing me, as I was putting them to bed," said Rebecca, and then she remarked how curious children were.

"Don't encourage their curiosity too much," said Lucy. "It's a great vice in

children to be always asking questions; I have corrected them for it more than once."

"Indeed, it's very troublesome, miss," replied Rebecca, "and I find it so particularly when I don't know what to answer them. But how quiet mistress is to-night!"

"It's the few drops of morphine I gave her in her gruel," said Lucy.

"It's a darling medicine," said Rebecca; "it does the nurse as much good as the sick body."

Lucy sighed tenderly, and said she could sit up for ever with such a sweet patient as Mrs. Spenser. Rebecca sighed responsively; and then Miss M'Cracken added that she greatly feared poor Mrs. Spenser would never get a natural night's sleep as long as she remained in the country.

"She never will be asy, anyhow," said Rebecca; "it stands to rayson."

"She never will be well, Rebecca," said Lucy, with sad solemnity.

This was the way the storm within doors was brewed for the easy and unsuspicious

rector. Miss M'Cracken's object was to get up a cry in the house that Mrs. Spenser would never get her health in the country. As to herself, she always professed the greatest aversion to town.

"The Dublin doctors would do her a power of good, I suppose, miss?"

"Of course they would."

"But they're very expensive, I'm tould, miss, and won't cure any but rich people."

"And isn't Mr. Spenser as rich as Crœsus?" asked Lucy. "But even if he was not, ought he to think of money when the health of that dear sweet woman is in question?"

"She's his wedded wife, at any rate," said Rebecca, implying some dissent from the flattering epithet Miss M'Cracken had applied to her mistress, but having a clear view of the strength of matrimonial obligations, as all women have.

"She is," said Lucy, with emphasis, "and she deserves better than to be murdered by the sea air, that never agreed with her, and

those country doctors, that hav'n't as much skill as my little finger."

The simile was not very disparaging to the country doctors, for Lucy's fingers had a great deal of skill in them.

"They do well enough for poor bodies," said Rebecca; "but of course, miss, a lady ought to have the best of doctors that's goin'; it stands to rayson."

The clock struck one.

"It's getting very late, Rebecca," said Lucy; "hadn't you better go back to your room?"

"Let me sit here by the fire, miss; do you go to bed, and I'll talk you to sleep, or I'll hold my tongue, just as you please."

"I'm not sleepy myself," said Lucy.

"Read me something," said Rebecca.

"Put some turf on the fire, and I will, then," answered Lucy, complaisantly.

"Shall I read you one of Mrs. Hannah More's 'Sacred Dramas?'"

"Just read me what you were reading for yourself, miss," said Rebecca, perhaps di-

vining that Miss M'Cracken's nocturnal studies were none of the driest, or spying a book that looked more amusing than instructive under the handkerchief.

"I was just looking," said Lucy, taken a little aback, "into a work called 'Clarissa Harlowe;' I suspect it's a novel; but I thought it right to know what it's about, in order to forbid the children to open it, should it contain any thing improper."

"Well, it doesn't sound improper at all," said Rebecca; "Clarissa is such a beautiful name for a lady—"

—"That you think," added Lucy, "her story must be very interesting."

So saying, she resumed her book and took up the story where she had left off herself, without taking much trouble to put her companion in possession of the previous part of it. Nor, indeed, was there the slightest occasion. Rebecca devoured every word with a rapture she had never felt before, and the book was never laid down until the flame of the candle suddenly collapsed into the socket,

and left the secret novel-readers in almost total darkness. Lucy drew the curtains to admit the gloomy grey of the morning, and Rebecca, huddling her cloaks and shawls about her, crept back by the same faint light to the children's room.

CHAPTER XII.

SUNDRY MATTERS.

" When that I was a little tiny boy,
With hey-ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day."
TWELFTH NIGHT.

A STORM always kept the Woodwards, too, in a state of alarm and excitement, though not entirely upon their own account. Mrs. Woodward was not the woman to fall into paroxysms of selfish apprehension, whilst billows mountain-high and fierce winds were threatening perhaps hundreds of hapless mariners with destruction within half a mile of her; and as to the curate, he was never so great as when a furious gale was vexing the coast and threatening to afford fearful occa-

sions for the display of his humanity and prowess.

Redcross was on the shore, and the windows of the curate's house commanded a view of the coast for an extent of many miles. The house was far from being as good as so good a man deserved to inhabit, or as solid as its exposed situation required in a country so subject to hurricanes. The chimneys were so tall, and at the same time so slender, that their standing was a standing miracle. In that house, indeed, there was rattling of window-frames, and shattering of panes, and creaking of ill-fitted doors, and whistling and howling of wicked blasts through hole and cranny, through ancient crack and modern crevice. Indeed, so continually recurring was the damage done by the wind, that repairing it perfectly was out of the question; it would have taken more than Mr. Woodward's income to have kept the glass in repair, for at that period there was a heavy duty upon that fragile article. The consequence was, that there was scarcely an in-

tegral pane in the upper apartments of the house ; and many had been shivered over and over again, until it was wonderful how paste and old copy-books kept the fragments together. You might have traced the progress in writing made by the little Woodwards from the first rude pot-hooks, by inspecting the slips of paper with which Hercules had managed to put off, as long as possible, the reference to the man of the diamond, which was inevitable at last. But the wood-work was almost as precarious as the glass, and it was no uncommon incident for a violent gust to burst in a window at one smash, instead of taking the trouble to demolish it by degrees. The curate was then obliged to unite the trade of the carpenter to the glazier's, and fortunately he had a turn for mechanical operations, and could even repair the brick-work a little, or do a matter of slating, to prevent the wind and the rain from becoming absolute masters of the house, while he was constrained to pay the rent of it. Had he required cheering while performing these humble offices, which the poverty of his lot imposed upon him, his

wife was there to cheer him, though she was always averse to his labours on the roof, which was very high and slanting, not to mention that the ladder was somewhat rickety by which her brave husband was wont to clamber to his house-top.

In the gazebo called the *Observatory* you may fancy what an uproar there was in such weather as the present. The windows there were boarded up with stout planks, like those of Apsley House in political tempests, but even then it was any thing but a safe place, for it was as obnoxious to the wind as a light-house, without being constructed in the same substantial way. Still it commanded so wide a view, that the curate used several times a day to venture up to it to take a more extended survey of the coast than he could obtain from any of the lower parts of the house.

Upon the first day of the gale, a small vessel had been seen in the offing, apparently anxious to run into some of the numerous creeks along the coast; but it was a lee-shore, and Hercules, who was a pretty good

seaman, perfectly apprehended the difficulties she must have to contend with in an attempt of the kind in such ugly weather.

On a minute examination, Hercules had no doubt she was a pleasure-boat; she was certainly not a fishing-smack, and was too small either for merchandise or war. That entire day she was seen beating about, until towards evening, when suddenly she disappeared, apparently behind a group of small islands in the offing, one of which was the romantic rock of which the Spensers considered themselves the suzerains. To send any relief off to the distressed stranger was out of the question; it was possible, however, that the storm might still drive her ashore, and in that case her destruction was almost inevitable, although it was also possible that timely aid might save the lives of her crew. Every exertion that humanity could make to provide against this contingency was made by the brave and worthy clergyman; and Father Magrath, the Catholic priest of Redcross (with whom Mr. Woodward, as well as

the rector, lived on the most cordial terms, notwithstanding both political and religious differences), was fully as prompt and energetic in doing all that charity dictated. Parties of the country people were despatched northwards and southwards along the cliffs, with poles, ropes, lanterns, and whatever was likely to prove serviceable, should the yacht be driven on the beach. Father Magrath, a bluff, benevolent man, went himself with one of these parties, and Mr. Woodward led another; they heard a gun towards the close of the evening, but saw nothing, and returned to the village in the dead of night, in the midst of the howling tempest, full of the saddest apprehensions as to the fate of the unknown craft. The next day, and the day following, rumours of more than one wreck at various points along the coast reached the inhabitants of Redcross, and it was but too probable that the yacht, if that were her character, was one of the number. There was a bare chance that, by some combination of fortunate circumstances turned to advantage by

very dexterous seamanship, she might have found shelter in a particular cove on the eastern side of the Spensers' island; but it was what the curate called a "potentia remotissima." The odds were enormously against the safety of any vessel situated as she was, much more against one that was obviously a stranger to the coast, and but ill prepared for its peculiar dangers. Familiar as the Woodwards were with storms, and their disastrous effects, they were always thrown into confusion by them. The domestic phenomena, always singular, became at such times doubly curious and striking. The curate sat down to his meals in the dress of the pilot of a life-boat; and Carry, with a double complement of petticoats, cloaks, and shawls, looked vast enough to be the mother of half her species, and almost as anxious as if she had actually so large a family. Ranging from room to room, to patch up the windows as well as she could, according as the wind shattered them, she almost unconsciously huddled on every thing wearable that came in her way, until she grew

into an actual mountain; but, with all the disadvantages of this prodigious *dishabille*, and the disorder of her cap and her hair, she was such a mountain as Mohammed would have gladly seen approaching him, or gladly have approached, if it had refused to answer his call. Mrs. Woodward was a very different woman in a hurricane from Mrs. Spenser; there is so wide a difference, even in its influence upon personal appearance, between being uneasy for others, and uneasy for one's self. The lines of the face are affected in quite another manner; the form of the visage is changed differently altogether. It would seem as if benevolence and selfishness acted on two wholly distinct sets of nerves and muscles.

At the parsonage the gale abated considerably, after blowing fiercely for a day and a night; but the rain served equally well to keep Mrs. Spenser in her normal state of unamiable excitement. She was now apprehensive of the glebe-house being washed into the loch by the flood, nor did she know any reason why

there should not be land-slips in Ireland as well as in Switzerland; in short, there was no fate so dreadful which might not be naturally expected, in such frightful weather, and such a detestable country. Another year in Ireland, however, would put an end to her sufferings; of that she was quite positive—but no matter, of course, what became of *her*. You might stereotype the speeches of such a woman.

The rector had not ten minutes of tranquillity the livelong day. Hurry-skurry overhead again; running of women to and fro; bells ringing convulsively; doors spasmodically opening and shutting; Miss M'Cracken calling to Rebecca; enormous fuss and humbug, all about nothing in the world but that the wind had cracked the corner of a pane of glass, and the rain had made its way through the tiny crevice, and trickled down into the room, where it formed what the governess poetically called "a sea"—a sea which you could have drained with a tea-spoon. What a consort this was for a country clergyman! Mrs. Spenser was never quiet and

inoffensive except under the influence of morphine, which it was almost to be regretted that her prime minister did not give her in larger doses. She was the wasp in her husband's peach—the nettle in his garland.

It enraged the gentle but ardent Elizabeth to see her father disturbed by such nonsense in so reckless a manner. She was proud of his preaching, and she admired his sermons all the more, because, elaborate as they were, they were not written with the sordid object of establishing a character for pulpit eloquence, and so advancing their author in the church; but simply with the pure and elevated purpose of communicating the most important truths in the manner he believed to be most impressive and intelligible to the "people of his pasture and the sheep of his fold."

Mrs. Spenser, on the contrary, took particular pleasure in molesting her husband when she knew he was engaged in writing his sermons; she thought it was a shameful abuse of his talents to exert them, as he did, in a remote rural district, for peasants who had

merely souls to be saved, instead of reserving them for the ears of bishops who had livings to bestow, or viceroys with still higher rewards at their disposal. Miss M'Cracken never returned from church, when the rector preached, but she was sure to observe—"What a pity it was, ma'am, to throw away such a beautiful discourse upon a little country church!"

The appetite for Richardson grew with the feeding, and that night again Rebecca took refuge in Lucy M'Cracken's cosy room, from her own comparatively uncomfortable and exposed one. There was of course the usual gossip before the reading. Lucy had noted Sydney's departure for Castle Dawson the day before, and now she did not fail also to remark the fact that this was the second night and yet he was not returned. Upon this subject she made a great many severe, and some very just observations; partly levelled at the young man himself, and partly at his father.

"In such weather as this, Rebecca," she

said, "to be galloping through the mountains, and out of his father's house for two nights running, without asking permission, or even informing his family where he was going."

Rebecca said it was very wrong.

"It is very *shocking!*" said Lucy (not thinking Rebecca's word forcible enough); and added, how very differently from Mrs. Spenser would she act, if she were a parent, and if she had a son, and so forth. Lucy, indeed, would probably not have erred on the side of gentleness.

"I'm told Master Sydney went over to Castle Dawson," whispered Rebecca.

"You may speak as loud as you like," said Lucy, implying the strong measures she had taken to quiet her dear mistress for the night. She then said in answer to her crony's remark,

"And he couldn't possibly go to a worse place, if only half what I hear about it is like the truth."

"It bears a bad name, true for you," said the other girl.

"And so do the people that own it," said Lucy. "It's no fit place for the son of a gentleman and a *clergyman* to be seen at."

"Mr. Dudley and Master Sydney are very great, I hear," said Rebecca.

Miss M'Cracken spoke very harshly of Sydney's friend, when her companion interrupted her by asking whether she had ever heard that he was paying attentions to Miss Elizabeth.

This was a surprise to Lucy. It was not often that any one had the start of her in domestic intelligence. She expressed her doubts whether Rebecca was correctly informed, but in truth she was embarrassed between her previous readiness to abuse Mr. Dawson, and a malign pleasure which she instantly felt at the idea of Elizabeth having an unworthy suitor, and, perhaps, making an unworthy match. In this ill-natured perplexity she abruptly changed the subject

by asking Rebecca had she ever been in Dublin.

"No, miss; I was onst in Londonderry," said Rebecca, "to see the gates closed."

The governess smiled with real contempt, but affected good-nature, and again asked her friend if she would not like very much to go to Dublin.

"Why, then, I would, miss," Rebecca answered; "but it's not for the sake of the doctors I'd care to be in it."

"No, I should think not," said Lucy, laughing; "neither you nor I want much doctoring; but I know your tastes, Rebecca, my dear, and I am positive you would be much happier there than here; it was that made me think of it; of course, my dear, we must do our duty wherever it pleases Providence to place us."

Her voice was becomingly low and serious as she delivered the devout part of this little speech, and a well-drawn sigh served for a peroration.

"Dublin is such a big place, I'd be lost in it," said Rebecca, paying much less attention to Lucy's bit of divinity than to the worldly part of her discourse.

"Oh, you would soon find your way," said Lucy, "and you would find more than that, Rebecca—"

"I suppose you mean sweethearts," said Rebecca, giggling.

Lucy admitted that she did, and (protesting her own unchangeable affection for rural scenes) drew a most bewitching picture of the Irish capital and the life that people lead there, particularly girls in Rebecca's sphere of life, who had no other employment from morn to night (it would appear from Miss M'Cracken's enchanting statement) but tea-drinking, car-driving, play-going, and all manner of fun and diversion.

"Did you ever see Donnybrook Fair, miss?"

Lucy had seen it, or said she had. "But I won't attempt to describe it to you," she

said, "for I couldn't ; and, besides, you wouldn't sleep a wink to-night, if I did, for dreaming of it."

Rebecca was mute with delight and wonder. Lucy left the potion to work which she had so adroitly administered to the girl's love of novelty and pleasure, and resumed the reading of the novel.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOUNTAIN RIDE.

"Next him was Feare, all arm'd from top to toe,
Yet thought himselfe not safe enough thereby,
But feard each shadow moving to or froe,
And his owne armes when glittering he did spy,
Or clashing heard, he fast away did fly;
As ashes pale of hew, and winged heeld;
And evermore on Daunger fixt his eye,
'Gainst whom he always bent a brasen shield,
Which his right hand unarmed fearefully did wield."

FAERY QUEEN.

WHILE the rector and curate were holding the dialogue on education recorded in a previous chapter, the handsome but headstrong youth to whom it referred, in a costume something between a sailor and a groom (not unsuited, however, to the unruly state of the

weather), was traversing a bleak mountain road, and caring very little what decision was come to on the academic question, having probably made up his mind to follow the bent of his humour, and enjoy what is called life, whether his lot should be cast on the banks of the Liffey, or those of the more renowned Cam.

Not more than a quarter of a mile from his father's gate, he picked up a companion, who was no other than Mr. Randal Maguire, commonly called Randy, his father's proctor, a very odd-looking old fellow, and with odd features in his character as well as in his face. Randal was going over to Castle Dawson also, partly in consequence of the intimation he had received from Master Dudley that he was prepared to settle the long pending arrear of tithes, and partly to collect the rent of a small property belonging to an English gentleman who had never seen it, and whose name was all that Randy knew of him. Randy was not himself the agent, but only his deputy. The agent resided in Dublin,

lounging about the clubs, being too fine a man to collect rents in person, particularly the rents of a small estate.

Maguire was a short, slender, elderly man, with a feeble frame, but a wiry constitution, always looking as if he had not many years to live, but burying in succession nine-tenths of those who had made the remark. In business, he was scrupulously exact and honest, in fact, in all respects an admirable tithe-proctor, except that his tendency was to apply the screw to the parishioners a little too powerfully ; but this was a propensity which in the service of a clergyman of Mr. Spenser's character he was obliged to keep in due restraint. Maguire's physiognomy was extremely queer; a small, withered face, undulating with pock-marks, and ending with scarcely any chin ; a pair of prying, decimating little reddish-gray eyes; a miserable crop of scrubby sandy whiskers; and a sharp nose, which had the extraordinary peculiarity of appearing either very long or very short, according to the position in which the spectator viewed

it, for it projected horizontally, so as to seem nothing at a front view, while seen in profile it looked like a long spout of a jug, or a teapot. This feature gave a peculiarly humorous expression to his face, and, indeed, he was considered a humorous little old fellow in the country; but a little humour goes a great way in a thinly peopled mountain district. Maguire had faults like other men ; he was very garrulous, as timid as a hare, and a most inveterate card-player. The passion of the lower orders of the Irish for cards has been noticed by the old chroniclers ; Campion gives some amusing instances of the extravagant lengths to which it was indulged in his time by the fellows who were called "carrows;" and though Maguire perhaps did not gamble quite so desperately as those ancient unworthies, he was keen enough in all conscience, and never travelled without a greasy old dog-eared copy of what the Puritans used to call "the devil's prayer-book" in one of his pockets.

The cowardice of the little proctor made

him always glad of a companion in his journeys through a wild and little-frequented country; but it was now particularly satisfactory to him, for though the agitation against tithes which prevailed in other parts of Ireland about this time, had not yet reached this remote district, symptoms of a disposition to join it had made their appearance, and the shadow of danger was enough to unnerve Maguire. Accordingly, he was delighted to find that his line of march on the morning in question coincided with that of young Spenser, who, upon his part, was not displeased to have Maguire for a fellow-traveller; not (you may suppose) for the sake of any help in need to be expected from him, but because his eccentricities, especially his open and avowed poltroonery, were amusing, and he had endless tales of the "hair-breadth perilous 'scapes," or more fatal disasters of tithe-proctors in the southern counties, where he always cordially congratulated himself that his own lot had not been cast.

"What would become of you, in times like these, Randy, if my father were promoted to a better living in Limerick or Tipperary?" said Sydney, as they jogged along, both indifferent to the rain which pelted them, for the elements were the only thing in nature that Maguire did not fear.

"By the powers, Master Sydney," said the little dastardly old man, "I often thought of that same; I don't think I'd flourish in Tipperary at all, at all. The boys are divils, I hear say, down there; and as to maiming or murthering a chap of my profession, 'faith, they think it no morthall sin to slaughter a minister himself." The proctor was in the habit of finishing his sentences with a noise something between a cough and a laugh; it was partly asthmatic, partly facetious.

"Well, this country, I hope, is quiet enough to please you," said young Spenser. "At the same time, they don't pay my father as cheerfully in some parts of the parish as they do in others; isn't it so, Randy?"

"By my troth, things are not as they used to be, sartinly, Master Spenser," said Randy. "I remember when the ministher hadn't to ask for his tithe twice ; and when the farmers used to run after me on the high-road. Now it's I that have to run after them; and some of thim's not very asy to catch. I don't see the zale that I used to do ; of coorse I'm alludin to the Catholics, and some of the Presbyterian boys in particular."

"Some go so far as to say there's a storm brewing against my father," said Sydney.

"It won't signify much, I'm thinking," said the old man, "there's some agitation and harranguin going on, I'm tould, in some parts, but Father Magrath has his eye on the chaps that's doing it, for he tould me as much."

"Where are you bound to, Randy, this beautiful summer day?" asked Sydney, the rain and wind almost taking his breath away while he spoke.

The old man's little decimating eyes twinkled with extraordinary satisfaction, as he replied, "I'm going the same coorse as your own self, Master Sydney, for I presume you are going over towards Castle Dawson?"

"What are you going to do at Castle Dawson, Randy?"

"Thin, I'm going to do what nobody has done there for many a long day—I'm going to receive money."

Sydney's countenance expressed his pleasure at this intelligence, for he was aware how the pecuniary claims of his father against the Dawsons had prejudiced Dudley in the eyes of his stepmother, and he was glad to see one obstacle removed to the reception of his friend at the parsonage.

"I didn't know whether I was standin on my head or my heels," continued Randy, "when I was sarved last night with a notice, in Mr. Dudley's own hand-writing, to go over some early day, and he'd settle

all demands in cash. By the mass, I could hardly believe my eyes; and I won't be cock-sure of the money until I have it lodged in the ould pocket-book in the the buzzom of my coat here." Randy used almost as much action in speaking as a Frenchman, and clapped his little withered hand on the place where he was in the habit of carrying his sacred treasures.

"Is it a large sum?" inquired Sydney.

"Seventy-six pounds seven shillings and sixpence," answered the proctor. "But it's more than the value of the money, Master Spenser; it's the example it will set in the country, where there's any thing going on that's not correct. By my faith, people was beginning to say that Mr. Dawson his own self was disposed to be combinin, as they're doing in other places."

"Combining!" exclaimed Sydney, angrily; "what do you mean by combining?—you don't mean to say that my friend Dudley Dawson, or his father either, are suspected of

any thing dishonourable, particularly towards our family ?"

"I only tell you what I hear said," said Maguire, coolly; "but of coorse, when the arrears is paid up, there'll be an end to all such insinivations."

"Such insinuations," returned Sydney, passionately, "are most impertinent, and I repel them on the part of the Dawsons, and Dudley in particular, with indignation."

"Be that as it may, Master Sydney, it's my duty to your father's son to acquaint you with what I hear and believe, that Master Dudley has some queer people about him just at the present time," said the old man, pertinaciously; using a liberty with Sydney, on account of his youth, which perhaps he would not have ventured to use with a man of more advanced years, in the same station of life.

"We'll drop the subject, if you please," said Sydney, imperiously. Randy submitted, and soon after asked Sydney to sing him

"The Boys of Kilkenny,"—a song which the old man particularly rejoiced in.

"Here goes, Randy; but it's no easy matter to sing with this wind in one's teeth." However, he managed a stanza or two, to the entire satisfaction of his companion, who had no idea that there was any better vocal music in the world; and indeed young Spenser had a good tenor voice, and sung with spirit and humour.

"Oh, the boys of Kilkenny are stout roving blades,
And if ever they meet with the nice little maids,
They kiss them, and coax them, and spend their money free,
Oh, of all towns in Ireland, Kilkenny for me."

"The wind is too strong for me. Were you ever in Kilkenny, Randy?"

"Then, I never was, Master Sydney, but I often hear talk of it as a mighty quare place, with fire without smoke, and the streets paved with marble."

"Shall we travel together and see the world, Randy?"

The rain was penetrating Randy's short threadbare old brown surtout, and the wind

was almost doing the barber's duty on his little wrinkled face. His efforts to laugh were laughable, as he answered,

"At all events, I'm growing too ould to be travellin and roamin such a day as this, Master Sydney."

"If you're old, Randy, you're tough," said his companion.

"Yes; I'm purty tough; thank God for it," replied the proctor.

"How do you feel when you ride this road alone?" asked Sydney, who knew the old man's chicken-heartedness perfectly.

"Och, thin, I don't feel at all warlike," said Randy.

"It's a bleak road," said young Spenser.

It was so, indeed; running through a succession of low brown hills, covered with a stunted heath, of which a hundred acres would scarce have afforded a brace of grouse a decent competence.

"It's murtherin bleak," said Randy.

"I'll give you another song, to keep up your spirits," said Sydney, and he struck up

the once celebrated Ned Lysaght's popular melody—

> "Oh, love is the soul of a neat Irishman,
> He loves all that is lovely, loves all that he can,
> With his sprig of shillelagh, &c."

Just at this moment a sharp turn brought them to the ruins of what seemed to have been, some centuries back, a castle of considerable strength and size. These ruins stood close to the road, on an abrupt eminence, presenting a very remarkable and picturesque object, known in the country by the name of the "Black Castle."

"A very convenient ambush, that," said Sydney, pointing to the ruins, "for footpads, if there were any in the country."

"Many's the time I've said that to myself," said Randy. "I never pass them ruins without shiverin and shudderin on the hottest day of summer."

"Now, Randy," said Sydney, suppressing a smile, "suppose a highwayman, six feet high, were to jump out of those ruins there upon you, with a blunderbuss or a brace of

pistols, to-morrow or next day, when you are returning with all the money in your pocket, what would you do? You'd make a fight for my father's property, wouldn't you?"

"By the holy spider," said Maguire, shrugging his narrow shoulders and scrutinising the ruins to which his companion pointed with an eye full of comical alarm and suspicion, "I'd make as good a fight for your father's property as I would for my own; but it's a runnin fight, and not a standin one, I'd make for either the one or the other. I'm not come of fightin people, Master Sydney."

"You wouldn't show the white feather surely!" said Sydney, as if he had now for the first time discovered what a craven the proctor was.

"Then I'm afeard I would so, and a bunch of them into the bargain, as big as the Prince of Wales's plume," said Maguire, with his little tittering cough.

"Now suppose any body were to pull your nose, Randy?"

"I could spare a bit of it, Master Sydney," and he laughed again in his peculiar way.

"Well," replied Sydney, "here's what will protect us both against all the highwaymen in Ireland," and he exhibited a case of very beautiful double-barrelled pocket-pistols, his last clandestine acquisition, and the latest addition to the schedule of his small debts.

Randy admired the arms, but seemed very well pleased when Sydney returned them to the pocket expressly made for them in the breast of his coat.

This and other chat of the same kind, with now and then the stave of a comic song, helped a little to beguile the tediousness of a long ride across moor and mountain; so desolate a track that they passed but one human habitation before they arrived at Castle Dawson, itself the bleakest abode that ever disheartened a resident proprietor or justified an absentee. Sydney and the proctor separated at the ruinous gate-house. The latter proceeded to his usual lodging

at a small inn hard by ; the former trotted up the neglected avenue which led to the house.

It had been in Chancery for fifteen years ! Is further description necessary ? Do you not see its shattered windows, neglected roof, dilapidated offices, green-white walls, hingeless doors, grass-grown walks, weed-cropped gardens, the stones of the balustrades dislocated as if by an earthquake, the premature havoc of the axe amongst such poor timber as there was, and the silent clock in the yard, announcing probably the self-same hour which it announced on the day that the bill was filed in the equity suit? But, in its best days, before it fell into the clutches of the ruthless power so vividly typified by Rabelais in " Gripe-men-all, the Arch-duke of the furred Law-Cats," Castle Dawson was a lonely, savage place (the very abomination of desolation), where the owners resided sometimes of necessity, but where nobody else ever willingly passed two nights in succession. The process-servers demanded

double fees for serving a latitat or a subpœna there. It was close to the sea, amongst hills that were barren without being picturesque; wretched crops of oats composed its harvests, stunted cattle showed the indigence of its pastures; in fact, with the exception of a few acres, the grounds were absolutely good for nothing but snipe-shooting, and the soil only fit for fuel. The word "Castle" was an ostentatious misnomer. The house was so called either because there was nothing at all castellated in its structure, or from the adjacent relics of what had perhaps formerly been some kind of fortress, which relics (only a few walls, with an arched gateway) had been incorporated into the offices, and now formed in combination with them a rambling extent of buildings in an advanced stage of architectural decay.

CHAPTER XIV.

CASTLE DAWSON.

"Panurge was a very gallant man of his person, only that he was naturally subject to a kind of disease, which at that time they called *lack of money;* yet, notwithstanding, he had threescore and three tricks to help himself at his need; of which the most honourable and most ordinary was by the way of filching; for he was a quarrelsome fellow, a sharper, drinker, royster, and a very dissolute and debauched fellow; otherwise, and in all matters else, the best man in the world. And he was still contriving some plot, and devising mischief against the serjeants and the watch."

RABELAIS.

THE remote, dreary, and almost inaccessible situation of Castle Dawson rendered it a most commodious retreat for a man of Dawson's stamp, particularly when he had company with him whom he did not care to acknowledge at the market-cross; for Maguire's information was correct; Dawson

had some guests in his house at the present moment, whom (engaging as their manners and conversation may have been) he was far from desiring to introduce abruptly to Sydney Spenser. Indeed he generally affected strict domestic seclusion when he came down to the country ; but the fact was, that in such a district, particularly in wild weather, his house might have been filled with the most notorious swindlers and black-legs in the empire,—he might have entertained Joseph Ady and Ikey Solomons without much risk of the fact being noticed in the columns of the *Morning Post*, or even in the Dublin newspapers.

On such a day as the one in question, the chance of a visitor was not much greater than if Dawson had lived on the top of the highest peak in the neighbouring mountains, or the stormiest island off the coast, and he was consequently not a little, as well as not very agreeably surprised, when Sydney Spenser, after having tried several damp

and dismal apartments without success, at length hit on the right one, and found him at dinner, with a distinguished company consisting of two guests, neither of whom carried any very strong testimonials of character in his countenance.

The entrance of young Spenser visibly disconcerted Dawson. He sprang up and vainly attempted to conceal his embarrassment under the mask of a boisterous welcome, horse-laughter, and violent shaking of hands. I do not well know how to describe Dawson. He had not a plebeian and still less a patrician exterior. He looked as if he ought to be a gentleman, and would have called any body out that questioned his title to that appellation, and yet he did not look gentlemanlike, or like the habitual companion of gentlemen. He was vain of his person, and might have once had some grounds for his conceit, but intemperance had bloated and inflamed his face, and injured his figure at the same time. He had

naturally good features, but dimmed with passion; the eye alone was originally a bad one—sinister, double, and designing. He dressed flashily, with bright colours, and over-much velvet and jewellery; strutted when he walked, and talked with a Celto-cockney accent, the tone of the society he kept in England grafted on the brogue of his Irish friends.

Dawson would more gladly have received any other visitor that day than Sydney Spenser. He had no wish to introduce him to either of the gentlemen who were then enjoying the hospitalities of his decayed house. One was a tall, gaunt, muscular man of thirty-five, or forty, in a seedy half-military blue frock, buttoned up to the throat; a black silk stock, or cravat, over which no shirt collar emerged; coarse gray duck, and a very indifferent pair of not very clean boots. When his host presented him as "Major Lamb," he bowed to Sydney in a most ungainly fashion, and smiled in so ghastly a manner that he could hardly have

scowled more disagreeably. In fact, Major Lamb looked very like a fellow who you might suppose had been drummed out of the guards, if he had ever been in his majesty's service at all, even with the rank of a serjeant-major. The other guest looked to advantage by his side, and he stood in want of a foil greatly. He was a pale emaciated youth, who had evidently been living on the capital of his health and marrow ; he had an aspect at once melancholy and profligate, and was attired in deep black, possibly mourning for some near relation, whose heart he had broken, and end accelerated, by keeping such company as that of Major Lamb and Mr. Dawson.

The first glance at these gentlemen reminded Sydney of Randy Maguire's remark, that "queer people" had been seen of late in Dawson's society ; and perhaps Dawson perceived something like surprise and uneasiness in his countenance, for, under pretence of making him change portions of his dress to which the rain had penetrated,

he carried him off through a labyrinth of dilapidated corridors up to a bed-chamber, where he accounted in a most satisfactory manner for the presence of the questionable people they had left behind them.

Sydney expressed his regret that he had not found his friend alone, as he had reckoned on.

"I *am* alone," replied Dawson; "you don't take those fellows for friends or guests of mine?—one is some sort of a surveyor or valuator, under an order of the coorts, and the other (the poor devil who looks consumptive) is an artist from Dublin, down here sketching the coast—I met him near this, and asked him to dine. I am under the disagreeable necessity of entertaining such people occasionally when I'm at home. You needn't take the slightest notice of them. As soon as dinner's over, they'll probably be off to attend to their business, and then we'll have a cosy evening, my boy."

"All right," said Sydney, whose faults did not include suspicion, "only don't turn

the poor devils out such an evening as this on my account."

"Give yourself no trouble about them," said Dawson, "but change your boots—here's a pair of tops of mine that will fit you—and excuse me for a moment, while I give directions to have your sheets aired."

Sydney pulled on the top-boots, and then finding his blue jacket damp, put on a coat of Dawson's, which he found flung on a chair. While he was thus engaged, Dawson flew back to the parlour, very considerately acquainted his guests with the account he had given of them, and prepared them for the part it was necessary for them to act in consequence. He then returned to the bedroom, and reiterated his apologies for having such low fellows at his table under any circumstances.

"Never mind," replied Sydney; "we'll get on very well, depend on it."

Dawson dropped the subject, and commenced admiring his flashy coat on his friend's back.

"That hoonting-coat," he said, "fits you

as if it was made for you; it's a little too tight for me, so it's your's, my dear fellow, if you fancy it."

"Thanks," said Sydney, coolly, and surveying himself with great satisfaction in a looking-glass.

The coat thus generously transferred and as liberally accepted was a bright green one, with massive silver buttons—one of the smartest things imaginable—but it required flash manners and green politics to match.

"You are surprised, I suppose," he resumed, as they went down stairs, "to see me on such a day as this?"

"I'm deuced glad to see you; it's a confounded relief to me. You're a darling fellow for coming over in this way."

"The parsonage is so devilish dull in wet weather," said Sydney.

"You'll find it dull enough here, I'm afraid," said Dawson.

"No, I shan't," said Sydney. "We'll smoke, and we'll practise pistol-shooting at the fire-screens in the long drawing-room; we'll get on well enough."

"I hope you have a good appetite," said Dawson, as they reached the parlour, "for you'll have coarse fare, I can tell you ;—you may suppose I don't treat valuators and strolling artists to French cookery."

"I'm as hungry as a hawk," said young Spenser. And so he was—hungry with the hunger of youth, exercise, and mountain air; and hunger is more concerned about the things *on* the table than critical upon the company *round* it.

It was not the dinner for a man who was at all fastidious; it required the piquant sauce of a keen and a healthy appetite, but with that zest it was excellent. There had been a fish, but it had been disposed of. There remained a corpulent boiled turkey; a dish of mutton-chops, very brown and unctuous; a ham garnished with quartered heads of cabbages, and two great chargers of potatoes—ample provision for a party of four men, though never so pot-valiant.

Sydney did ample justice to the viands, and so did the major with the mild surname,

so little in harmony with his personal appearance. The young man in black (whose name was Thomson) seemed to have no stomach, except for the fiery port and sherry, the only wines on the table. Dawson kept politely winking at Sydney, as Messieurs Lamb and Thomson evinced every now and then their contempt for many of the little conventionalities of polite society; while at the same time he proved his own superior breeding, by clamorously inviting Sydney to eat, and occasionally blurting out some coarse inquiry about some member or another of the Spenser family. As to the surveyor and painter, he took little notice of them, and that little in a very lofty and distant way.

The only male attendant was a red-headed slovenly kerne, Terry by name, with a countenance in which savagery and dullness contended for pre-eminence. His dress was a tarnished livery-coat, white turned up with green, with red plush breeches, made for a fellow of twice the height; and he had a villanous trick of wriggling his shoulders

as he presented you a plate, or shuffled with the wine round the table. A particularly uncannie and ill-favoured old woman, answering to one's idea of the hag of the robber's cave in "Gil Blas,"—and probably the cook,—made her appearance at one of the doors more than once during dinner, either to hand in a dish or carry one away ; and now and then there seemed to be an interchange of the most virulent abuse between her and the red-headed butler ; but it was in Irish, so that its eloquence was lost upon all the company except perhaps Dawson himself, who sometimes swore at the old woman, but took no other step to forbid the colloquy.

Sydney was little of an observer of either men or manners. Even when he had satisfied the desires of nature, he paid less attention to the company than he did to a lank voracious greyhound that was pacing round the table collecting scraps, and to a rifle of Dawson's which stood in a corner of the room.

There was one thing, and one thing only,

comfortable in the apartment. It was the fire, which was glorious. The Court of Chancery had exhausted every thing but the bogs on the property, and a capacious grate was filled with a mountain of turf, in a state of triumphant conflagration. The ruddy flame gilded the scanty and damaged furniture (the work of the law-cats), and diffused aglow over the room, which made a young man soon forget the deficiencies of carpets and curtains, though accustomed to Axminsters and chintzes.

The subdued mellow light was exactly the sort of sombre yet warm illumination which Dawson would have chosen to set off his professional guests to the best advantage, since he could not well darken the parlour altogether.

The removal of the cloth made an improvement; for it was not spotless, any more than the reputations of some who sat round it. But the next removal was better still: for Messieurs Lamb and Thomson, having finished their dinners, exchanged moody

looks, and rising simultaneously, made ungainly obeisances, and left the room, which certainly looked more respectable after their departure.

"Hard work," said Sydney, commiserating the lot of the artist, and the surveyor "under the coorts."

"D—d hard," said Dawson, using the strong word, to which young Spenser had not yet accustomed his lips. But 'Rome was not built in a day.' Perhaps, in time, Sydney will use strong words as flippantly as his tutor."

Mr. Thomson and the surveyor, however, were not such objects of pity as young Spenser supposed; they only adjourned to a smaller room in a sequestered part of the house, where they soon kindled a good fire with more of the same capital fuel, and made themselves extremely comfortable for the rest of the evening, less by their colloquial resources than by a bountiful provision of that etherial liquor called mountain-dew, the far-famed vintage of the Barony of Innishowen.

As soon as these worthies had retired, said Dawson to his *protégée* and pupil,

"What will you drink, Sydney?"

"No more wine," was Sydney's reply.

"Terry, the black bottle yonder!" Dawson called to his wild butler.

In a few minutes the cold mountain-dew in a black bottle, and the steaming water in a great jug, stood side by side upon the table, flanked with a bowl of sugar and a plate of lemons.

Sydney was just beginning to be familiar with strong liquors as with strong language. However, he had now the excuse of a long wet ride, and probably the contents of the black bottle were purer than those of the decanters. He composed a large glass of punch, and Dawson mingled another, "stiffer" by some degrees, as the phrase goes with punch-drinkers.

"Well, my boy!" cried the host, with hearty emphasis, drawing his chair by one and the same movement nearer both to his

friend and the fire, and slapping young Spenser on the knee.

"This is what I call comfort," was Sydney's answer, adjusting his elbows on the arms of his chair, and thrusting out his legs, with the top-boots on, towards the blazing fire.

"Shall we have a cigar, eh?"

"Have you got any of your famous Havannahs?"

Dawson produced a red-leather case from a side-pocket, and extracted a couple of cigars, one of which he presented to his friend, who made an *allumette* of the back of a letter, and lighted first his own cigar, and then Dawson's.

They puffed alternately, and alternately looked at one another in silence, with the mute eloquence of smokers.

Dawson was the first to speak; lowering his cigar, he said,

"I've got good news for you, Sydney;—prospects is brightening, my boy."

"I knew that before you told me," said young Spenser.

"How?"

"Randy Maguire rode over with me."

"Oh, indeed," said Dawson; and then added, with a strong expression which need not be repeated, "Sydney, my boy, it was no fault of mine that the tithes due to your father from this property were not settled long ago."

"You need not tell me that," said Sydney.

"There's no man living, Sydney, for whom I have the same respect and admiration for that I have for your father; I swear by his name, so I do. If he only knew what a battle I had with creditors and lawyers, and every body, to have the tithes settled before any other claim against the estate! I was as firm as the Hill of Howth, or I shouldn't have the money to pay Randy Maguire to-morrow morning."

"My father shall know how well you have acted," said Sydney.

"Don't say a word about it," said Dawson, "what's right is right; I only did my duty, and I want no reward, my boy, but the testimony of an approving conscience;—so no more on that head. Sing me something sprightly, now;—have you got anything new?"

Sydney sang a song that was once popular at the banquets of the Irish volunteers, and which Mr. Crofton Croker has given in his collection.

"Love and whisky both
Rejoice an honest fellow," &c., &c.

Dawson either was, or affected to be, in ecstacies at Sydney's performance. It is scarcely possible he could have been sincere, in declaring, as he did it with several oaths, that it far surpassed any singing he had ever heard on the London boards, though he had head Braham himself. The effrontery is marvellous with which some men can flatter others in the grossest manner to their faces. But then there are people on whom flattery can never be laid too thick to be agreeable; you may lay it on

them with trowels ; nay, you may shovel it over them ; they can bear any weight of it ; cartloads of encomium, mountains of compliments, Pelion on Ossa, and Ossa on Olympus. There are gross feeders, or there would not be gross caterers. Dawson knew very well the voracity of Sydney's appetite for praise, but he had other ways of making himself agreeable to his guest beside the fox's trick of commending his voice.

"Now tell me," said he, after some little pause ; "tell me something about yourself,—have you paid the gunsmith in Letterkenny the ten pounds for the fowling-piece ?"

"No," said Sydney, gloomily—Dawson was now coming to the points that he was most concerned about—"but he can wait awhile longer—I'm more uneasy about what I owe *you*."

"Oh, not a word of that, my boy—light another cigar—no matter if you can never pay me ; it can stand over at any rate as long as you like, but settle the other matter as soon as you can, for the rogue was saying

the other day he'd apply to your father if it wasn't arranged speedily. Small creditors is such harpies."

"I see no way of paying it," said Sydney, with much dejection, "except by applying to my father myself."

"Which I won't hear of your doing; you mustn't be annoying a literary man like him about paltry money matters. I'll see what I can do for you in a few days. It would be pleasanter for you to owe nobody anything but myself. Between friends it's nothing; but it won't do for a clergyman's son to have tradespeople running after and dunning him for dirty little matters of ten pounds or so. Is there anything else bothering you?"

"I am sorry to say there is; I owe *your* tailor five guineas for that white bang-up coat, and I owe Amby Hogg, in Redcross, nearly as much more for cigars and gunpowder and sundries. Oh, and there's the brass swivel for the cutter."

"How much did that come to?"

"I don't exactly know; not very much, I suppose."

"Well, altogether it won't break us," said Dawson; "don't make yourself uneasy about the coat—I believe I have worn it as much as you have—but Amby Hogg must get his money, or some of it, for he's a griping rascal, with a dozen hungry brats at his heels, and, if he gets impatient, he'll go badgering your uncle Woodward, who won't think so little of five pounds as you and I do. By-the-bye, it's a long time, Syd, since you *did* your uncle for me."

By *doing* his uncle, Dawson did not mean cheating him, but only taking him off, or mimicking him, which Sydney could do capitally. A very dangerous talent it is, that of mimicry; it makes enemies and no friends; and, as it is commonly directed against the gravest and worthiest characters, those who exercise it freely come in time to lose all respect for those high qualities which they are in the habit of making sport with for their light companions. Sydney, however, imitated his uncle's oddities to the life; and on this occasion he gave an imita-

tion of Hercules in the pulpit, which threw Dawson into unaffected raptures.

"Another tumbler, Syd," he said, after applauding vehemently.

Sydney declined; he had already taken two—the first time he had ever made so deep a potation. "Dudley," he added, warmly, "you are certainly the best fellow and the best friend in the world."

"Nonsense, man, nonsense; but what did you do with Maguire?—take just half a tumbler more."

"He went to the inn," replied Sydney, yielding to the sweet temptation, and nearly filling a wine-glass from the black bottle, while he hummed—

"Love and whisky's joys,
Let us gaily twist 'em;
In the thread of life,
Faith, we can't resist 'em."

"Is Randy as fond of cards as ever?"

"That he is; always carries his soiled old pack about with him."

"Soiled as they are, I wish we had them; I'd teach you *écarté*."

"Send Terry for them," said Sydney; "shall I pull the bell?"

"Do, if you can," said Dawson, laughing. The bells of Castle Dawson had ceased to ring some years back.

He proceeded himself to despatch the messenger, and found Terry in the room to which Messieurs Thomson and Lamb absconded so submissively after dinner. Terry was lying supine in the middle of the floor, not quite asleep, yet not exactly wide awake. Thomson was snoring thunderously upon an old sofa, or settle-bed; Lamb was sitting doggedly before the flickering and decaying fire, his arms crossed, and his red chin reposing on them, looking surprisingly truculent for so tame a profession as that of a surveyor and valuator. Behind him was a small deal table, on which stood some glasses, and what had, a few hours before, been a bottle of whisky.

"What, now?" demanded Lamb, gruffly.

"It's Terry I want," said Dawson. "Get up, you lazy good-for-nothing hound," and

suiting the act to the word, he gave the recumbent domestic a kick in the ribs, so violent, that it made him spring to his legs with an actual howl of pain and astonishment.

Having thus effectually roused him, he gave him his commission and returned to Sydney.

"Who's Maguire?" asked Lamb, as Terry was preparing to obey his orders.

"Randy Maguire, the little ould nosey procthor," said Terry.

"I'll go with you and make his acquaintance," said Lamb, seemingly captivated by Terry's description of Maguire.

"Go without me, Mr. Lamb, honey," said Terry, "Master Dudley has just kicked the breath out of me, the d—l's own sweet luck to him."

Lamb undertook to be Terry's deputy, and rising from his seat, took down from a peg in the wall a broad-leaved oil-skin hat, such as pilots wear, clapped it down over his eye-brows, wrapped himself in a huge

camlet boat-cloak, and proceeded on his mission, having first, however, further provided himself with an old umbrella, which he found in the hall, and a lantern which the beldame in the kitchen accommodated him with. What an envoy to send to the poor old man, who was as arrant a coward as Acres, or Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "a coward, a devout coward, religious in it!"

CHAPTER XV.

MONEY.

"What a god is gold,
That he is worshipped in a baser temple,
Than where swine feed?"

TIMON OF ATHENS.

THE inn where Maguire proceeded to "take his ease," after parting with young Spenser, was not much more of an inn than Castle Dawson was of a castle. Randy, however, was in good luck, both as a collector of rents and of tithes, for Mr. Branagan, the inn-keeper, paid him a matter of a few pounds that were due for a farm he held in the neighbourhood, and two or three other farmers, who chanced to be weather-bound there that evening, likewise availed themselves of the opportunity to discharge

their holdings and their consciences of their debts to their landlord and the church.

Randy then sat down to his frugal supper. He was a carnivorous little fellow, when he was out collecting, and felt himself justified in exceeding the ordinary bounds within which poverty confined the ambition of his palate. Randy was nothing of an epicurean in the primitive and vegetable sense of the term; he had no objection to a scrag of mutton, or a shin of beef (the only joints he had much knowledge of), but his chief delight, as his chief experience, was in the flesh of the unclean beast, amongst gammons, and shanks of hams, particularly. He had an extensive acquaintance with pig's faces, and a pig's foot was one of his dainties. Once in his life had he eaten of a leg of pork, with the accompaniment of pease pudding. It was in the rector's kitchen, and the memorable day was registered by the proctor "amongst the high-tides in the calendar." This very evening, he discussed

that leg of pork and pudding over again with Mr. Branagan, and no doubt the pleasures of memory sweetened the less delicate meal which was now served up to him. It was pork, but of what part was a mystery. Randy, however, was hungry, and asked no questions, but ate of it with as much relish as if he had been a Turk, or a Jew, with the sauce of prohibition to make it piquant.

Some of the people in the kitchen, knowing the old fellow's habits, proposed a game of cards, while he sipped his grog, but Randy was wet and weary, and retired that night sooner than he was wont to do. He was anxious, too, to be alone with his money. Altogether, when he crept up to his little chamber under the thatch, he had the gratification of counting, smoothing, marking, and otherwise manipulating a sum of between eighty and a hundred pounds in notes of nearly as many different banks, provincial and metropolitan.

The passion for money was illustrated strikingly and curiously in the character of

the little tithe-proctor. Randy was remunerated for his services with a fixed salary, and he was scrupulously honest and punctual in making over to his principals all the sums he received; but he delighted inconceivably in the mere act of receiving. The mere sight and touch of the money, —the mere flapping of the wings of Plutus passing ever so fleetly over him, gratified his disinterested covetousness inordinately. The uncleanest rag of a bank-note—the filthiest dress that ever filthy lucre wore—a tattered old note, which he was not even to retain possession of, perhaps, for half a day—thrilled with rapture his little yellow palm, made his fingers quiver, and his eyes dance and glitter. So far his avarice was sensual, almost the only sensual luxury the poor old man was acquainted with; yet at the same time, was there ever so pure a form of the love of money? For it was not for himself he grasped it; if he was rapacious (and it was only the fear of Mr. Spenser's displeasure that kept him from

being a Verres in his line) it was not with the slightest view to his own profit, but simply out of a strong affection for the sight of the paper or the coin itself. Mammon had never a sincerer worshipper. Mammon did little for poor Maguire; housed him poorly, clothed him sparingly, put scarce a pound of flesh on his bones, fed him grudgingly on herrings and potatoes, varied only with eggs and rashers of bacon, supplied his extraordinary length of nose with only a penny-worth of snuff weekly; yet was the devout little old proctor more loyal to his false god, than many a Christian is to the true and bountiful divinity who clothes him in soft raiment, lodges him in a palace, and feeds him daintily thrice a day.

No sooner had he climbed the steep narrow stair-case, or more properly ladder, which led to his familiar roost, than closing the door he squatted himself down on a rough-hewn deal chair, over his twinkling farthing candle (a peeled rush dipped in the melted fat of sheep) to reckon out his money, and

perform the necessary little operations and tendernesses towards it, previous to vesting it respectfully in the old black-leather case, which (as we have seen) he always carried in a privy pocket wrought into the breast of his coat, on the inner and left side, so as to be as near his heart as possible.

One by one he took up the notes delicately and reverently, as some great scholar and editor in the Vatican might handle a fragment of a lost decade of Livy discovered in a state of extreme decay, dropping to pieces like tinder. Then he very gently smoothed down every piece of bank paper separately; no lady's maid ever handled a berthe of the costliest point more daintily. When every dog-ear was removed, he took from an old pouch, which was also one of his invariable travelling companions, a little short-necked bottle of ink, and the stump of a pen, looking as old as himself, and set about marking the notes in order, which he did on the upper left corner of each with the initials of his own name in minute cramped characters,

placing each as he marked it straight before him, one above another, so as to make a pile which he might afterwards sit and contemplate to his soul's content.

He was on the point of completing this labour of love, and was just putting the hieroglyphics to the thirteenth note, when there was a step on the creaking ladder, followed almost immediately by a tap at the little door, and Randy said, "Come in;"—he had been expecting the maid of the inn, a niece and namesake of his own, to come and arrange his little bed for him, and so certain was he that it was Maggy Maguire who now entered, that he continued his proctorly occupation without looking up from the table.

Dudley Dawson's ill-looking messenger stood glaring at him and his bank notes, with eyes expressive of a kind of avarice very different from that which constituted Randy's ruling passion. The fellow's imagination probably made the heap of paper look more considerable than in fact it was. He stood

glaring fixedly on the little proctor while he marked the fourteenth and fifteenth note, and it was probably the stillness of the room, when he expected to hear Maggy bustling about it, that first made him raise his head. He would have shrieked, had he been less terrified by the apparition that loomed on him. The figure of Lamb was formidable enough of itself, but the dark light of the rush made it still more appalling, and the fellow's head actually nearly touched the ceiling, or the roof, for they were identical. Lamb addressed Randy by name, in what he perhaps considered an amicable tone, but his blandest address was gruff and savage ; and it so heightened the proctor's alarm that whatever reply he made, as he huddled up his money, was perfectly inarticulate.

"It's not your bank-notes I'm come for, Mr. Maguire," said Lamb, with a grim smile at the old man's trepidation.

"Who are you?—what do you want?" gibbered the proctor, recovering his speech, and at the same moment crushing up all his

paper into a wisp, and thrusting it into the depths of his pocket.

Lamb smiled again in his sinister way.

"I was sent," he said, "by Master Dudley Dawson—"

Directly the name was mentioned, Randy's terror abated, and he saw his visitor in quite another light.

"To settle the arrears," he cried, eagerly; and so excited was he at the prospect of receiving the money, that, without waiting for a reply, he garrulously proclaimed the amount he expected to receive, not leaving the truculent stranger time to mention what his business really was, or to interrupt Randy's revelations, had he been disposed to do so.

When he paused, expecting his grim visitor to rain gold upon him, and learned the trumpery matter about which he came, and that he knew nothing about the arrears until informed by himself, never was a cautious little old man so confounded.

"Why didn't you say that before?" he

cried, with peevish vehemence, and pulling out his pack, he handed it to the demandant with the utmost trepidation, anxious to be relieved as soon as possible from a presence so sinister, and feeling as if the very proximity of a man of Lamb's appearance could not but lessen the number of his bank-notes.

Lamb bid him a surly good-night, as he thrust the cards into his breast, and stumbled down the ladder to return to the castle. Then little Mary Maguire came in for a bit of a scolding. Randy rated his niece roundly for not having given him some notice of the arrival of such an ugly customer, particularly at a moment when he was counting his money.

Mary could tell him nothing about Lamb, and said that nobody in the house could give him much more information ; all she knew was that he had very lately made his appearance in the country, and had been observed prowling about the castle and neighbourhood. Maguire's thoughts (natu-

turally enough, considering what his vocation was) were all more or less connected with the impost which it was his duty to collect ; and every thing about Lamb's appearance suggested and encouraged a suspicion that he was some low itinerant incendiary, who had arrived in this hitherto peaceable district to organise the same system of violent resistance to tithes, which prevailed so extensively in other parts of the island. Then, on the other hand, he appeared to be in the service or employment of Dawson, who was going himself to give the very next day so signal a proof of his own determination to support the law and the rights of the clergy. Maguire did not well know what to think, and (after again arranging and fondling his notes) he went to bed in a state of perplexity that made him dream of a great many fearful things, belonging more to the meridian of Thurles than the quiet parish of Redcross. Perhaps his supper of pork had something to do with it.

It was an improving night to Sydney

Spenser, for he learned that important branch of useful knowledge and polite education,—the game of *écarté*. After playing for upwards of an hour, Dawson ordered the grilled remains of the turkey to be served up. Sydney smoked another cigar, made another libation of the etherial dew, and then felt nearly as drowsy as if he had taken so much "poppy or mandragora." So soundly did he sleep that night that he knew nothing of what went on in the house and had no notion the next morning that all its inmates had not been as quiet and well-behaved as himself. It was late when he came down, but Dawson was still later, so that it was just one o'clock when they rose from breakfast, neither having made a meal worth a place in history. Sydney proposed to adjourn with the pistols to the long drawing-room, which was the regular shooting-gallery at Castle Dawson.

"Business before pleasure, my boy," said his exemplary friend, "let us first step down

to the inn, pay Mr. Maguire a morning visit, and settle our little account with him. He may, perhaps, be anxious to return home."

"Very well," said Spenser.

They put on their rough coats and waterproof hats, and trudged down the miry, grass-grown avenue, Dawson pointing out every moment some improvement he was on the point of making, a new approach to the house, a belt of wood to be planted, an unsightly wall to be pulled down, or masked with ivy.

They found Maguire on the tenter-hooks of expectation, nervous and fidgety to an extreme. He had been wondering for several hours that he had not been summoned to the castle, and had his receipt ready drawn on the proper stamp, only leaving blanks for the date and his own signature. He thought the happy moment would never come when he should receive the long pending arrears, and when he descried Dawson and Sydney

approaching, he would have jumped for joy, only that he was so old and rheumatic.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Maguire," said Dawson, in his loud hearty way, grasping the proctor by the hand.

"Good-morrow, Randy," said Sydney.

"Good-morrow, kindly to your honours both," said Maguire, consolidating his acknowledgments.

"Well, Maguire, have you any objection to receive a little money this morning?" asked Dawson, with a wink at Sydney.

"No, your honour, nor never had," said Randy, with his little laugh.

"Let us to business, then," said Dawson.

Maguire led the way up to the little dormitory, where he had the small deal table (scrupulously washed that morning by his niece) in readiness with all things needful for the transaction of business. It scarcely occupied five minutes, but there may be enormous bliss as well as enormous suffering in five minutes.

First, down on the table in golden concert chinked six and thirty sovereigns, looking red and almost hot from the mint: had the gold been made into an instrument of music, and had a seraph played on it, the harmony would not have been so sweet to the ear of Maguire. After the chime of the precious metal came the crackling of forty pounds in crisp and maiden paper of the Bank of Ireland, and it would have been hard to determine whether the chink of the bullion, or the sound of the notes were the more melodious. Every passion has its music; love the lute, glory the trumpet, avarice the ringing of coin and the rustle of precious paper. Had Dawson been an Orpheus, or a Mozart, he could not have so ravished the ear of old Randy Maguire.

"When do you return, Randy?" asked young Spenser, as he was leaving the room.

"This afternoon, if the weather takes up," replied Randy, "but in the course of to-morrow at all events."

"Perhaps we may travel together again," said Sydney; but Dawson put his veto on that proposition in the most positive manner, not without more than one very unnecessary allusion to the other world and a certain warm province of it.

Well, if business put pleasure down in the morning, the latter, *en revanche*, engrossed the rest of the day all to itself. As to Dawson, he seemed almost delirious with excitement. His spirits almost crushed Sydney's. The fire-screens were riddled with pistol-bullets ; they played cards and backgammon; they sparred, they leaped, they lunched, and Dawson took a good deal of wine at luncheon. Then, for about half-an-hour, Dawson disappeared, and Sydney occupied himself in the interval with trying on various articles of Dawson's gay and miscellaneous wardrobe. When Dawson re-appeared, they had a bout of fencing, after which they smoked a couple of cigars each; then Sydney shot at a rook on a Scotch fir from one of

the parlour windows with his friend's rifle, and frightened the solitary bird without hurting him, and then — it was near dinner.

A dismal day it was out of doors, and little less bleak within. The rain fell with a melancholy pertinacity, only checked by the sweeping wind. Nothing was visible from the windows of Sydney's room but a wilderness of brown heath and a waste of surly waters. The waves howled sorrowfully along the craggy beach, and thundered in its wave-worn hollows, some of which, from the closeness of the roar, seemed to undermine the house itself. The only question was, whether the sights or the sounds were the most hideous at Castle Dawson. The evening, however, would probably have passed heavily enough, had it been like the preceding one, a *tête-à-tête*, or a *teat-a-teat*, as Mr. Dawson pronounced it. But the dejected artist re-appeared at dinner, and Dawson's agent and man of business, as he called

him, a certain Mr. Sharkey, a "special attorney," well known in his profession, arrived unexpectedly from Dublin. This made a pretty *quartette;* and after dining, and much smoking and punch-drinking, cards were proposed again, and the game was whist.

At first, Dawson and Mr. Sharkey would only play for amusement, but at Sydney's instance (though he knew almost nothing of the game) they commenced playing sixpenny points. The second rubber the points were shillings. It ended (nobody remembered at whose suggestion) in playing for crowns, and at one o'clock in the morning Sydney rose, having won upwards of ten pounds from the pretended artist.

Then there was another fiery supper; more grilled bones, more cigars, more punch; much slang, cock-pit anecdote, and profane swearing. The attorney punned, and repeated his own waggeries at sessions; Dawson vapoured about public spirit; Sydney

sang bad songs and mimicked good men; and the artist showed a marvellous knowledge of low London life, as if he was the Hogarth of Bethnal-green, or the Wilkie of St. Giles's. Then more cigars, more punch, and to-bed without family prayers.

So ended the second day of Sydney's visit. The third was a broken one, for Dawson and Sharkey were called away by sudden business to the county town; Sydney proposed to accompany them; and, as they rode through the village, they found Randy Maguire mounting his little brown hack at the inn-door, to wend his lonely way back to Redcross, full of apprehensions and presentiments of danger; and in point of fact, although he did his best to argue himself out of his fears, there was only too much ground for entertaining them. At an early hour that morning he had observed two men, whose appearance he disliked, taking the same road he had himself to travel; one of them bore a strong resemblance to his ac-

quaintance of the previous evening, which made him feel exceedingly uncomfortable, notwithstanding his knowledge that he was a person in Dawson's service.

Dawson and Sydney wished the poor little collector a good morning and a safe home, as they passed him, which he returned with such a mournful benediction, and so wistful a look at young Spenser, that the latter could not refrain from lingering a moment behind, to cheer up the old man, and to express his regret that it was not in his power to ride home with him, which he well knew was what Maguire wanted.

"It's only bekase I have so much *money* about me, Master Sydney," he said, in a very low voice, as if afraid that the very pony should hear the word that had such magic in it.

Sydney had a misgiving that it was wrong to leave the proctor to travel alone under such circumstances, but he had promised to accompany Dawson, so he contented himself

with again guaranteeing the perfect safety of the route, and rode forward after his friend. Dawson and Sharkey were both very unsociable; Dawson neither talked himself, nor seemed to wish Sydney to talk to him; he was moody, and seemed to be brooding on some painful and harassing subject. Sydney good-naturedly thought it was, perhaps, the general state of the country that was disturbing him; or that he was pondering deeply on the responsibilities of a member of parliament. At length, however, it occurred to him that it was just possible Dawson might have private business to transact at the place he was going to, and that he would prefer proceeding there unaccompanied by him; so, after about two hours' ride, without the exchange of as many sentences, Sydney pleaded the continuance of a headache, with which he had set out, and said he would return to Castle Dawson. Dudley made no opposition, and they separated; but Sydney changed his mind on gaining

the village, bethought himself of poor Maguire whom he had before deserted, and not questioning but that he would overtake him in the course of the day, instead of going back to his friend's dreary house, he turned his horse's head towards Redcross, and was soon in the heart of the mountains. He might easily have overtaken the tardy ill-mounted old proctor, but his horse lost a shoe, so that he was under the necessity of performing the greater part of the journey on foot.

At one moment he was almost on the point of resuming his original intention, for on putting his hand into the pocket where he kept the case of pistols which he had lately been displaying to Maguire, he found only one of them in its place. This surprised and vexed him, and he would certainly have returned in search of the missing one, had his steed been in travelling order. As it was, he proceeded on his way homewards, soon forgetting his loss, and awaken-

ing the echoes of the lonely brown mountains with—

"Bryan O'Linn had no breeches to wear,
So he bought him a sheepskin, and made him a pair,
With the skinny side out, and the woolly side in,
The warmer for that, said Bryan O'Linn."

But now and then he puzzled himself, thinking how the pistol could have been abstracted from the pocket, and repeatedly during that long solitary ride did he recollect, with unpleasant feelings, the faces he had seen under his friend's roof, and even at his table.

CHAPTER XVI.

NOCTURNAL DOINGS.

"Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
While night's black agents to their prey do rouse."

MACBETH.

IT is necessary now that the reader should be informed of the things which were done in Dawson's house on the first night of Sydney Spenser's visit,—while he slumbered as deep as a watchman of the old municipal régime, under the combined influence of the mountain air and the mountain dew. We need scarcely say that neither was Mr. Thomson an artist, or the gentleman called Major Lamb a surveyor or valuator. They were profligate acquaintances and instruments of

Master Dudley's; and they were now at Castle Dawson for a special purpose, not unconnected with the proceedings in Chancery, but one which the Chancellor would have by no means approved, had an opportunity been afforded him of giving his judgment upon it.

We must premise that the Dawson property (originally a large one) had been created by Dudley's great-grandfather, in a manner not very uncommon at the period, namely, by a career of successful smuggling, for which the wildness of the coast, and the close proximity of the house to it, afforded every conceivable facility. Such at least was the popular belief in the country, and the story was heightened as usual with circumstances of a still more daring and criminal nature; some people going so far as to say that frauds upon the excise were only one source of profit to the founder of the family, who would sometimes evince his hospitality to merchantmen by inviting them on shore, almost under his own

windows, with lights put up expressly by himself, and with no expence to the public, at places where the Trinity Board had neglected to erect them. However, all suddenly raised fortunes are obnoxious to some scandal or another of this kind ; certain it was, that in the space of a few years, old Mr. Dawson, from a poor became a very rich man ; and the glitter of wealth, according to custom, soon blinded people's eyes to the means by which it was amassed, and enabled its possessor to take a place in society commensurate with his fortune. He purchased land, and with the proprietorship of acres, assumed the air of state and importance which acres alone bestow ; money, once made, did every thing for him; he married a lady of good family, who added to his estate; he bought a seat in that notorious den of thieves, the Irish House of Commons, which some pleasant politicians are so eager to re-establish ;—he even discovered that his own family was an ancient and distinguished one, and spent a few thousand pounds in collecting

at sales and auctions in both countries a gallery of portraits (some by eminent painters), which served as well to represent his grandfathers and grandmothers, as if they had been painted expressly to commemorate their features.

The story ran, that this enterprising gentleman selected his grandfathers by their noses; and whenever he saw or heard of a portrait with what was called "the Dawson nose," which was somewhat cocked up like himself, he purchased, or gave an order to have it secured for him; and when the picture reached Castle Dawson, it was styled an admiral, a general, an ambassador, or a lord-mayor, according to the costume in which the figure chanced to be dressed. There were some busts, too, amongst the family memorials thus oddly collected; and amongst the number were two which (if you believed your own eyes as well as Mr. Dawson's account of them) established, beyond a doubt, that not only was Mirabeau one of the family, but that it traced its origin and nose to Socrates himself.

The majority of pictures in the Dawson gallery were, as may be imagined, of an order of art not much above sign-painting; but there were some portraits of more value than was generally suspected: there were two Vandykes, two Lelys, one by Reynolds, and another supposed to be a Rembrandt. There was also a group of characters by Rubens, including a beauty of enormous development, who might have better passed for Mrs. Woodward's great-grandmother than Mr. Dawson's, only for the decisive circumstance of the *nez retroussé*. The whole collection, however, was soon to be brought to the hammer, under an order of a Master in Chancery, who, though an old master himself, knew nothing about the old masters of the pencil, and had given no particular directions for the valuation of the pictures by competent judges, nor for their safe custody previous to the sale. Under these circumstances, the idea had occurred to the fertile mind of Sydney Spenser's friend, to turn to his own account the valuable part of the

gallery, substituting for it a corresponding quantity of trash, picked up at the old curiosity shops, at the rate of a guinea a portrait. There was also an opportunity for practising the same little artifice with respect to a few hundred pounds' worth of books, which had been collected by his ancestor, merely on the principle that a great house ought to have something like a library, and that the books ought, at all events, to be superbly bound. Expense had not been spared, so that the books were not only in rich bindings (now indeed damaged by damp and neglect), but some of them rare copies of the works of standard authors; including, for example, a splendid quarto edition of Molière, with finely executed engravings, which had cost forty guineas, and would now, probably, produce a larger sum. The books to be abstracted were, as well as the pictures, to have their places supplied at a moderate cost; and the business which Dudley Dawson had just now in hand, assisted by Messieurs Lamb and Thomson,

was to remove this property clandestinely from the house of his father, and transport it to London, to be there disposed of with the privacy suited to a transaction of so delicate a nature.

No sooner had Dawson assured himself, by applying his ear to the key-hole of Sydney's bed-room door, that his young friend slept profoundly, than he proceeded, with a dim lamp in his hand, to the apartment where his auxiliaries had sequestered themselves, and rousing them from their repose (for it is a mistake to think that rogues don't sleep as well as honest men), summoned them to the work of the night.

"Now, boys," he said, in a low deep voice, "silence and activity! Follow me!"

The miscreants obeyed, shrugging their shoulders, and knocking against one another, and against the furniture, the room was so gloomy, for there was no light but from the one flickering lamp. Terry had nothing on but his shirt, and his red plush breeches, and was scarcely able to walk, from the effects of

the kick he had received from his mild young master in the early part of the evening.

They crept through the passages, not making half the noise which the wind did, whistling through the chinks of the wainscots, and the shattered panes of glass, and slamming distant doors, with that particularly melancholy sound, which writers of ghost-stories make such good use of. At the head of a stair-case Dawson paused a moment, and held the lamp up to two pictures which hung there. One was the Rembrandt; it was expeditiously unfixed from the wall by the major and Terry, when Dawson took it out of their hands, and carried it down stairs himself, for greater security. In the hall were several of his cock-nosed ancestors, but their descendant treated them with supreme contempt, and passed on to the large dining-parlour, which was not that where Sydney had been entertained. In this room were the marble busts already mentioned, and the rest of the pictures of value; they were taken down with marvellous celerity, and packed, with

their frames, in wooden cases, which had been provided for them, Dawson looking very sharp to protect the faces of his pretended forefathers from being scratched in the process. The room where the books were was contiguous, and there also stood several strong boxes made expressly to hold those which had previously been selected for embezzlement. The packing of the books occupied more time than the pictures : there were in all four boxes full, and Dawson did this part of the work almost exclusively himself, having probably made himself acquainted with the knack the booksellers have of packing daintily, so as to prevent collision with Russia, or a brush with Morocco. When he came to the splendid edition of Molière, he hesitated for an instant, and then set it aside ; his assistants concluded that the book was of little worth, but the fact was, that Dawson reserved it for a judicious present to Mr. Spenser, to whose library he fancied it would be a desirable addition.

The boxes required nailing, but that operation was postponed, out of consideration for Sydney, whose sleep might have been disturbed by it.

Now came the most trying part of the business. Dawson and Lamb being the strongest of the party, undertook the weighty porterage of one of the boxes of books; Thomson and Terry carried a case with the pictures; and then it was that the peculiar subterraneous contrivances of Castle Dawson were once more turned to use, and in a manner quite in keeping with their original destination. They were all strong men, except Mr. Thomson, or they could not have done what they did that night. Dawson and Lamb went foremost, with the lamp on the top of the box, and having crossed the hall, they descended a short stair-case which led to the kitchens, and other apartments on the basement story. Few people knew that there was any lower excavation than this, save such as rats or mice might have made to burrow in. Lamb and Thom-

son fancied they were going to deposit the booty in some of the ordinary vaults or cellars with which all houses are provided; and in fact it was at the wine-cellar they first halted with their loads.

Hoarse, protracted, and gradually increasing sounds, accompanied with something like the splash of waves at stated intervals upon a pebbly beach, were now mournfully audible. Dawson unlocked the door with a thick, short, rusty key. The mournful noise, and the sullen splash, became more distinct.

It was a spacious desolate vault, with a multitude of compartments; the most of them were quite vacant; the pleasant, profligate fellows, and jovial jobbers of fifty years since had drunk them dry; only a few bins were partially stocked, and but one could be said to be well furnished with wine. The wine, however, was not the present object. The boxes were set down; Dawson scraped away with his feet the thick coating of clay and saw-dust, with which

the floor was covered, and presently a trap-door was disclosed to view. It was secured only by a bolt, and when the bolt was drawn, the door opened downwards; you saw a ladder descending to unknown depths, and now were fully satisfied that it was the sea itself whose dashing immediately under your feet had for some time been audible. When Thomson, who bore the lamp, lowered it into the opening to examine the rounds of the ladder, the light, faint as it was, probed the obscurity of the cavern, and was visibly reflected in flickering gleams, either by the gushing tide itself, or the bright wet shells and pebbles which the water, retiring with a long-drawn sigh, left behind it.

Not much art, but a good deal of toil, had been required to construct this secret communication with the ocean. A deep fissure in the cliffs, broad enough to admit a small boat at time of high-water, had been extended by the operation of blasting, so as to form something like a subterraneous canal, or the horizontal shaft of a mine, termi-

nating directly beneath the vault where these lawless men were now peering down into it.

Terry was sent down in advance, and scarcely was the splash of his feet heard amongst the wet shingles when he raised a howl and an execration, as if Cerberus had bitten him with his three sets of fangs at once. It was not Cerberus, but a huge lobster, which had lost no time in attacking the midnight invader of his retreat. Terry's brogues were none of the slightest, but the angry shell-fish cut one of them clean through, and it was not until after a battle of some minutes that the superior animal, howling and blaspheming all the time like a demon, succeeded in extricating himself from the .inferior. Indeed, except that the element was water and not fire, the entire scene was infernal enough ; below was the caitiff in red plush struggling with the crustaceous monster ; while over-head, straining their eye-balls through the trap to see what was going on, were the faces of Dawson and his

knavish companions; Dawson railing and cursing at his unlucky vassal, and menacing him with horsewhips; Lamb witnessing Terry's tortures with the mute and grim delight of an amateur executioner; and Thomson, with his unalterable look of sad and exhausted turpitude, perhaps the most fiendish expression of all.

A boat was secured to a staple in the rock at about an arm's length from the foot of the ladder. It was brought directly under the trap, and the boxes were lowered with ropes into it, Dawson and Lamb placing them so as to let them slide down the ladder, and Terry guiding them below, until they were safely lodged in the hull of the boat. Three times did these sons of night go back and forwards between the cellar and the great dining-room, until all the boxes and cases were thus mysteriously secreted, preparatory to their being removed to another receptacle known to Dawson, where they were to be shipped off to England at a convenient opportunity. At every return to the cellar,

the leader in this piece of midnight villany knocked off the neck of a bottle of wine with the key of the cellar, to cheer and refresh his comrades, who stood indeed much in want of refreshment, for the job tried the sinews of the party, if it did not sting their consciences. The least guilty was Terry, for he acted merely as a loyal retainer of the Dawson family, and had nothing but kicks for his reward and the cruel squeeze which the fish gave him. Lamb and Thomson were mercenary accomplices, and had been brought over specially from London to assist in this transaction ; not that Dawson could not have found lawless fellows like them nearer home, but that he was already mixed up with them in more than one dark affair, and did not choose to extend unnecessarily the circle of his vicious connexions.

It was daylight, but a dim, drizzling morning, when the business was finished, and the four emerged from the basement-story, looking like a low dissolute crew tumbling out of a tavern in Bethnal-green,

after a debauch and a boxing-match. Lamb had cut his lip at his last draught from the broken bottle, and his face was not only begrimed with dust, but dabbled with blood, as if he had been at a murder. Thomson and the wretched Terry threw themselves on the naked stone, and the latter was instantly asleep. Dawson crept up to the room where Sydney lay, and assured himself that the seal of repose was still unbroken on his eye-lids. Then he descended, and took Lamb aside into a villanous yard, where an old hound was howling in a dilapidated kennel, to give him further directions respecting the embezzled property.

"Very well, Mr. Dawson," said Lamb, after Dawson had concluded, "all that shall be done; and now let me tell you, that both Thomson and myself are of opinion that this job is well worth another hundred pounds."

"A hundred fiddlesticks," said Dawson; "you shall have what we agreed on—not a farthing less, and not a farthing more."

"We must have another hundred," re-

joined the major. We'll not sail for London without the money."

"I wish you may get it," said Dawson, with an irritated laugh. "Come, Lamb, I'll stand no such nonsense ; do your duty, and I'll do mine; we ought to know one another well enough by this time." Then he cursed the old hound in the shed, venting on the brute the rancorous feeling excited by his rapacious companion.

"I know you well enough, Mr. Dawson."

"And I know you, Lamb; so no more balderdash. We bargained for fifty pounds and your travelling expenses, and a bargain is a bargain."

The hound continued to whine, and the noise, combined with the whistling of the wind and the bellowing of the waves, made it difficult enough to carry on a conversation. Dawson snatched up a branch of a tree that lay at his feet, and, flying at the dog, beat it savagely, in a kind of parenthesis.

"It's a bargain with only one side to it,

from this moment," said Lamb, looking diabolical.

So did Dawson after his barbarity to the old dog, but he commanded his temper with the human brute, and said, in a voice comparatively soothing,

"Keep yourself cool, Lamb, and listen to me. I could just as easily pay you ten thousand pounds down at this moment, as the hundred you talk of. The fifty for you is ready; twenty in hard cash, and my note of hand for the remainder. It was no easy matter, under existing circumstances, to raise even the twenty; but it was a point of honour with me to settle partly in cash for this night's job, so I raised the money."

But Lamb was not mollified by this speech.

"And is it also a point of honour with you to pay seventy-six pounds seven shillings and sixpence to Mr. Maguire, the tithe-proctor, to-morrow morning?" he asked, with a fiendish grin.

Dawson's face, red at all times, grew crim-

son with surprise and rage; then it turned to a livid purple, as he demanded what Lamb meant by his question.

"I mean just what I say," replied the major. "Is it a point of honour with you to pay a rascally proctor, when you can't settle an honest account with a friend?—that's a plain question, Mr. Dawson."

"What the fiend is it to you," cried the other, "what I pay Mr. Maguire or any body else, or whether it is tithe or not?"

"Just this, Mr. Dudley Dawson—that if there's money for the parson, there's money for hard-working men like us;—our's is the prior claim."

"We'll see," retorted Dawson, fiercely and doggedly.

"We will," echoed Lamb, in the same determined way.

"If another guinea would save you and that consumptive varlet snoring in the hall from Tyburn, or a worse place, you should not have it from me," cried Dawson.

Lamb was silent for one moment—it was a moment of rapid, deep, and atrocious meditation.

"Mark what I say," he said, in a hoarse, resolute growl, approaching his companion as he spoke, and thrusting his ill-favoured and bleeding face close to his ear, "if we don't get something handsome out of you, we'll manage to get it out of Mr. Maguire."

Dawson regarded him with an eye of fierce scrutiny, and demanded what he meant.

"Coax it out of him," said Lamb, with his atrocious smile; and then added, in a whisper between his teeth, "it wouldn't be a much worse job than we have just been doing, Mr. Dawson."

Dawson's countenance assumed an expression difficult to understand. It was not approval of Lamb's suggestion, and still less was it horror at it. Perhaps he thought it not worth an observation. However, no more was said. Lamb seemed to abandon his attempt to extort more money from his

employer, who seemed, upon his side, glad to have the conference over; and indeed they both wanted some repose after such an extraordinary amount of physical exertion.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLOOD.

"There is sure another flood toward, and
This couple is coming to the ark."
As You Like It.

Return we now to the parsonage, which we left with a hurricane blowing, but with very little idea that it was destined to blow one of the rector's daughters a husband. It is pleasant to go back to the haunts of civilisation after passing a couple of days at Castle Dawson, and it is agreeable also to mix the proceedings of grim ill-favoured men with the doings of women like Arabella and Elizabeth Spenser.

We have mentioned the rudely constructed

wooden bridge across the upper and narrow part of the estuary, at a distance of some two or three miles from the residence of the Spensers. For ordinarily rough weather this structure was sufficiently firm ; but it proved unequal to withstand the violence of the storm that now raged, with the additional strain of an enormously increased volume of water, partly produced by three days' incessant rain in the mountains, partly by the influx from the ocean under the action of a furious west-wind. About five o'clock in the afternoon, on the third day of the storm, the bridge gave way, and in a very few minutes scarce a plank remained to show where it had once stood.

The shooting-lodge of Mr. Spenser's friend, Lord Bonham, was situated about five miles to the north of the parsonage, in the heart of the mountains, an extremely beautiful wild spot, to which the Spensers sometimes made excursions and pic-nic parties with the Woodwards and other neighbours. There was, at the time we speak of, but one practicable

and that a very circuitous route, between the lodge and the village of Redcross, and this depended upon the wooden bridge, and was totally interrupted by its destruction. Two gentlemen, one well mounted and attended by a servant, with a good horse under him likewise, the other riding a stout black pony (one of the same breed as Mr. Woodward's), were the first to discover, to their extreme inconvenience and distress, the havoc occasioned by the flood. The party was coming from the lodge, and proceeding southwards, intending to dine at a house in the neighbourhood of Redcross, and remain there until the weather should clear up. They had had a long, rough ride, and had been comforting themselves for the last half hour by talking of the good table, and the excellent bottle of wine, they expected at the house where they proposed to bait for the evening. The rider of the black pony was Lord Bonham's agent, a fat, short, round, red-faced, fidgety little man, with a white hat, a heavy brown coat, and a shawl like a woman's wrapped round his throat, burying

half of his amusing physiognomy. He looked, however (as far as the play of his features were visible), excessively agitated and dismayed, on reaching the place where the bridge, to his personal knowledge, had stood only the day before. Surprise seemed to have deprived him of the power of speech, but his companion (a tall man, under thirty, with a showy figure, and gentleman-like appearance, though his air was a little arrogant), exclaimed in a dry, high-pitched voice,

"I say, Trundle, where's the bridge?—I see no bridge, Trundle."

"Nor I, Colonel Dabzac," replied the gentleman addressed, looking comically dismal, and gazing ruefully on the surging and triumphing waters, "all I know is that it was there at six o'clock yesterday, or we should not be on this side now; it's an extremely ugly business, that I can tell you, colonel."

"What's to be done? that's the question. Trundle, you know the country—I don't—are you sure we are at the right point? Is there another road?"

"No road that I am acquainted with but this—no other road to Redcross."

"We must swim for it, I suppose," said the colonel.

"One thing is certain," said the other, "we shall not reach our friends in time for dinner, to-day ; I doubt, indeed, if we shall dine at all, without returning to the lodge."

"Which I positively won't do, Mr. Trundle."

"Then, colonel, we have no alternative but to turn to the right and go to Mr. Spenser's."

"That—Whig parson!"—the reader will excuse us for not recording the epithet used by the colonel.

"Then we must either go back all the way to Bonham Lodge, or stay here all night. —The parson has got two handsome daughters, I can tell you that, colonel."

"Has he a good cook?—that's more to the point," replied the other ; "however, any port in a storm—*en avant*, Mr. Trundle; it's getting late ; we had better ride hard, or we'll come in for the cold shoulder."

Without waiting for a reply, the colonel set off at a fast trot, and the pony that Trundle rode did its best to go at the same pace, very much to the grievance of his pursy rider, who had not been so long on horseback for several years, and was already uncomfortable enough in his saddle, beside being very embarrassed by a huge roll he was carrying, like a map or survey; and in point of fact it was one. Fain would he have remonstrated with his hardier comrade, but the blustering wind, which blew right in his teeth, took away his breath, or prevented the complaints which he tried to gasp forth, from reaching the colonel's ear. It was all in vain to pull in the obstinate pony; poor Trundle, sadly embarrassed by his enormous map, tugged hard at the reins to restrain a speed so adverse to his personal ease, but the beast had the spirit of competition which the man wanted, and seemed perfectly to understand the gestures of Dabzac, who looked back over his shoulder at intervals to see that his friend was not losing ground.

The colonel, however, was obliged to slacken his pace before long, owing to the steepness and roughness of the road, if road it might be called. This enabled Trundle, or rather the pony, to rejoin him; and then it was highly diverting to observe the little round man's physiognomy, as he received the compliments of his companion upon his admirable seat (the sorest subject Dabzac could have hit on), and the merits of an animal, whose only demerit in the eyes of his owner was the stubborn speed at which he insisted on going. The pause was but momentary; the road grew level again, and the colonel, intent on his dinner, pushed forward, the pony again accepting the challenge, and Mr. Trundle in vain endeavouring to call attention to the beauties of the stormy sunset, and its effects upon the ruins of the Black Castle, at which they were now arrived. No man living cared less for sunsets, or ruins, or any thing picturesque and romantic than he did; but he thought to induce his impetuous friend to slacken his pace a little, either not

knowing or not reflecting that Dabzac was quite as little sensitive to the charms of scenery as he was himself.

Arabella and Elizabeth Spenser were standing at a window in the library, contemplating the weather-beaten shrubs and down-trod roses, when the two horsemen, such contrasts in all respects, came trotting up to the parsonage, drenched with rain, and bespattered with all the various soils of the country, so that an agricultural chemist could have inferred the rural produce of Donegal from an observation of the state of their boots. Such arrivals create a lively sensation at quiet glebe houses, particularly in such dreary weather. The person of the colonel was not unknown to Arabella, for she remembered having once danced with him at a country ball. Both girls, however, recognised Mr. Trundle instantly, even under the cumbrous disguise of his huge brown coat, and the cotton shawl that enveloped his face. A groan escaped from Elizabeth, which of itself was sufficient to intimate that

a more agreeable guest could easily have presented himself. One likes to hear a pretty woman groan, when it is not the expression of actual pain or misery. Elizabeth Spenser groaned charmingly. Why she groaned now will appear very shortly.

Mr. Spenser, who was sitting with his wife, recognised Dabzac directly he saw him, and there were not many men in Ireland whom he would not have more willingly received into his house, for Dabzac belonged to a class for whom, both socially and politically, the rector, having strong Whig prejudices, entertained a decided dislike, the high Tory magnates of Ulster, who, at the period of our story, had not had their crests lowered by the repeated victories of the demagogue, and the triumphs of the popular cause. Such social prejudices, sometimes even amounting to antipathies, were prevalent in Ireland at the time we speak of; they were the growth of laws and systems which, with a few exceptions, have been wisely abandoned, and were themselves

irresistible arguments for the abandonment of them.

Mr. Spenser, indeed, had not much reason to be pleased with either of the gentlemen who took refuge under his roof that tempestuous evening. Mr. Trundle, though not formidable in the way the colonel was, was, perhaps, the more formidable of the two. The little round red-faced man was one of the numerous troublesome, self-opinionated, but well-meaning personages, who, at the period of our story, had their heads stuffed with projects of all kinds for the improvement of Ireland, and could talk of nothing but the crotchet uppermost at the moment, utterly disregarding fitness of time or place, or the tastes and temper of the company. Now it was the reclaiming of bogs; now the draining of lakes; now mines; now canals; now a scheme of colonisation; "everything in turn and nothing long;" but the plan of the moment was always, of course, the only plan to save the the country. As to Mr. Trundle, he had

only just abandoned a desperate undertaking against the great bog of Allen, and was now enthusiastically engaged in a terrible design against Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly; mad on the subject himself, and driving every body mad who had the misfortune to encounter him.

The reader will now easily comprehend why Elizabeth Spenser groaned when she saw this gentleman approach the parsonage, with the huge roll in his hand, of which she guessed the nature only too correctly. The groan, indeed, was more on her father's account than her own. The never-failing placidity and benevolence of Mr. Spenser particularly exposed him to bores of every kind, just as a jar of honey attracts wasps, or a sugar-bowl on a sunny breakfast-table gathers all the buzzing and droning things in the room about it.

Mr. Trundle introduced his friend the colonel, and Mr. Spenser and his daughters received them with a gracious hospitality which made Dabzac instantly feel that he

was the guest of people of refinement, whether of the right sort or not. The colonel's servant had carried a small portmanteau, containing a change of clothes and a dressing-case, but the agent was utterly unprovided, so that Mr. Spenser had to accommodate him with one of his own black suits, in which, when he re-appeared in the drawing-room, he cut a singular figure; the skirts of the coat sweeping the floor, while the tightness of the body gave it almost the stringency of a straight waistcoat, an article of dress (by the way) which many thought that Mr. Trundle should have been provided with long ago. While Colonel Dabzac was indulging a sort of dull, dry facetiousness he had, at the expense of his travelling companion, dinner was announced; and then the struggles and fidgetings of the little agent, in the act of presenting his arm to Elizabeth, were so ludicrous, that it was with no small difficulty she concealed from him how much he amused her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IMPROVEMENT OF IRELAND.

"*Dogberry.* Truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all on your worship.

"*Leonato.* All thy tediousness on me!—ha!

"*Dogb.* Yea, and 'twere a thousand times more than it is."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

IT was a momentous occurrence in the lives of both Miss Spenser and Colonel Dabzac, the carrying away of that wooden bridge. The colonel was too busy, however, losing his appetite to lose his heart that day to any lady in the land. But Arabella, from the first (although perhaps nobody noticed it), regarded him with an eye of favour; and it was not for Mr. Trundle that she came down to dinner, dressed with more than usual care

and elegance. She liked his height, his whiskers, his name, his fortune ; she had no objection either to his pomposity or his politics ; and of all things, she liked his title of colonel.

However, he was a colonel little more than nominally, or figuratively, for he was not an officer in the king's army, but only a lieutenant-colonel in the Londonderry militia, a corps which he had never seen, and which had probably only an existence on paper, just enough to allow some twenty or thirty country gentlemen to give themselves ridiculous martial airs, and swagger in scarlet coats at a Lord-Lieutenant's levees.

As to Arabella, she was just the girl to captivate a man like Dabzac, whose heart, like her own, was a mere animal organ : whose tastes, like hers, were intrinsically vulgar; and whose eye, like hers also, was one of those that are fascinated more by an epaulette, or a livery, than by the most glorious prospect in nature.

Miss Spenser, indeed, possessed every

charm that could make a woman attractive to an unintellectual, unsentimental man. There was, in fact, only one thing against her ;—she was the daughter of a Whig parson !

Mr. Spenser was a Whig, and a zealous one; but his politics and his profession were kept totally apart. He never attended political meetings, and scrupulously abstained from the remotest reference to political events, questions, or principles, either in his sermons, or in his pastoral intercourse with his parishioners ; but he was not without the natural wish to propagate his opinions, and he did so quietly with his pen, sometimes in a pamphlet, sometimes in the *Edinburgh Review*, or some other liberal periodical. These productions, of course, were anonymous, but known to be his in the literary and political circles. Occasionally, however, he amused himself with essay-writing upon lighter subjects, and his desk contained many pleasant papers, or fragments of papers, which he would now and then

read for the entertainment of his daughters, or a few of his friends. As to allowing politics to interfere with the kindly relations of private life, it was utterly foreign to Mr. Spenser's character ; and the best proof of this was the fact that his curate and brother-in-law, Mr. Woodward, was the most resolute anti-Catholic in all Ireland, the most redoubted champion of Protestant ascendancy in church and state, and yet they lived (for it was equally creditable to both) on terms of the most cordial and brotherly affection, having a good-humoured battle occasionally about Mr. O'Connell's proceedings, or one of Lord Plunket's speeches, but the same hearty good friends after the engagement as before it. Still, there were certain people who would not or could not differ temperately and politely with a man of the rector's liberal views—people who asserted what they called their Protestant principles in an intolerant domineering way that was most offensive to Mr. Spenser; and the Dabzac family, and their connexions, were of the number.

When he met these people in society, he studiously avoided collision with their prejudices ; he knew how useless it is to reason with passion and self-interest, and he never attempted it ; but he had no objection to argue a little with a man like Woodward, who, though a bigot on a few points, was a bluff, conscientious, and most good-natured one.

Probably Dabzac expected that the Whig parson would talk nothing but Whiggery all day long; if so, he was agreeably disappointed, for Mr. Spenser never once quoted the *Edinburgh Review*, or mentioned the name of Charles James Fox ; nay more, Dabzac might have been under his roof for a month, and never have heard a syllable from him upon any of those subjects, or upon politics at all, except in the most general way, or respecting some point upon which politicians of all creeds were pretty nearly of the same opinion ; and even in such a case, lightly and almost playfully, without the least approach to vehemence or argumentation.

Then, bad as Mr. Spenser's Whiggery may have been, his wine was good, and Colonel Dabzac was enough of a liberal to drink and enjoy a bottle of old claret, although bought from a Catholic wine-merchant, beside being the produce of a Catholic country.

But, indeed, as to that day's conversation, neither Mr. Spenser nor Colonel Dabzac had much share in it, for the ardent Mr. Trundle, albeit not very easy after his ride, and any thing but comfortable in the rector's coat, soon engrossed all the talk to himself; and, of course, his theme was the improvement of Ireland, for he had only the one arrow in his quiver. Mr. Trundle was the most zealous, indefatigable, benevolent busy-body in the world; as in shape he was not unlike a humming top, so the tone of his voice was not unlike the sound of that monotonous toy, when it spins on the nursery-floor. Before he finished his soup, the "hideous hum" commenced; it was all about a meeting ever so great that was to be held somewhere the following week, for the purpose of considering

his magnificent scheme for a ship-canal between Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly, as the basis of a wonderful system of inland navigation, absolutely essential to the prosperity of Ireland ; indeed the only chance she had of escaping "everlasting redemption," as *Dogberry* says.

"I must prevail on you," he said, in a tone of voice amusingly insinuating, with occasionally a forcible-feeble emphasis on his words, "to sign our monster petition, at all events, Mr. Spenser, and *our address to the Crown*—the most *important* document that was ever drawn up in Ireland—I drew it up myself—strong but *moderate*—I am always for moderation but *I speak out*—all we want from the government is thirty millions sterling—we don't ask more, and we won't take *one farthing less.* And I must have the ladies, too. I can't do without the ladies. The ladies must join us. A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, as I said the other day in Derry,—I did, indeed, Miss Spenser."

Elizabeth endeavoured to express, by her looks, her admiration of Mr. Trundle's eloquence at Derry; encouraged by the smile, the humming-top instantly resumed.

"It will bring back our absentees—it will give employment to *two millions of our poor suffering countrymen*—nothing else will ever do it. I don't want organic changes. I don't want revolution—I told them so at Derry. I only want *thirty millions sterling*, for the improvement of our inland navigation. Now, Mr. Spenser, won't you support me?"

"Thirty millions is a great deal of money," said Mr. Spenser, very much at a loss what to reply.

"A mere trifle. What signifies thirty millions, or sixty, to the British Treasury? And so I took leave to tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a letter I addressed to him last year, to get a little assistance for our General-Lake-Drainage Company. I want the nobility and gentry of Ireland to *put their heads together* and get something for my unhappy country. Is that unreasonable, Mr. Spenser?"

"I would rather see them put their *hands* together and *do* something for her," said Mr. Spenser, very quietly.

"We are too poor to do any thing for ourselves; we must get the sinews of war from John Bull; we must get the thirty millions. Only give me the thirty millions," persisted Mr. Trundle, as persuasively as if Mr. Spenser had the money in his pocket for him at the moment.

"Irish independence would do much more for the country than English money," said Mr. Spenser, but said it to himself—he was afraid to utter so bold a proposition above his breath, for fear of exciting Dabzac, who was a fair representative of that class of Irish landlords, who only "put their heads together" to devise the means of evading their duties, and only use their hands to dip them into English pockets.

How charmingly the remainder of the evening passed, we leave the reader to conceive. Miss Spenser, indeed, and Colonel Dabzac seemed to have some agreeable chat; but the rector and his second daughter had

not one moment's respite from Mr. Trundle, and his thousand and one projects—canals, bogs, fisheries, colonies, and small-loan funds; quotations from his letters and pamphlets; abstracts of his speeches, petitions, and correspondence with London and Dublin officials; for he was the plague alike of the Treasury in London and the Castle in Dublin, and had made more than one Irish Secretary think seriously of resigning his office.

Providentially at length the colonel, being very much fatigued, gave unequivocal symptoms of somnolency, so that Mr. Spenser had an opportunity of suggesting an early move bed-wards, which accordingly took place, after an exchange of the usual drowsy civilities.

"Oh, papa," cried Elizabeth, when her father returned to the drawing-room, after having conducted his guests to their chambers, "what will become of us, if the weather does not soon mend? My poor papa!—and you to preach on Sunday!"

"The bridge ought to have stood just ten minutes longer," said Mr. Spenser, with Christian resignation.

The girls kissed their father and retired; Elizabeth meditating how to take the whole weight of Mr. Trundle on her own shoulders the next day, or at least diminish the burden to her father as much as possible. As the girls passed the little round agent's door, they distinctly heard him humming to himself about Loch Swilly, for want of somebody else to hum to. It was (as Mr. Spenser observed the next day) a capital illustration of that bitter curse of *Thersites*—"Thyself upon thyself!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROBBERY.

"Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field."

OTHELLO.

AT eleven o'clock that night the parsonage was profoundly still, all its inmates (except Lucy and Rebecca, still reading "Clarissa") either sleeping or retired to their beds, and courting repose, if not enjoying it. The gale was abated, but the rain came down in only more impetuous torrents. Half an hour later, Mr. Spenser, who was a light sleeper (probably having been cured by his wife of the habit of deep slumber), was awakened by sounds very unusual at such an hour—the tramping of horses' feet, human voices, and then the sharp ringing of a bell.

His first idea was, that this untimely hubbub was occasioned by the return of his son, and under this impression he made no movement to rise. The domestics had evidently been roused, for he could distinguish the unlocking and unbolting of the house-door, and instantly afterwards heard the same voices again, but louder and more distinct. In a few seconds there was a quick step on the stairs, and a tap at the door of his bed-room. He jumped up, and found a half-dressed servant with a lantern, who, in a state of excitement, with a countenance pale with alarm, informed him that the arrivals were Mr. Woodward and Mr. Maguire, the tithe-proctor, and that the latter had been robbed and half-murdered.

With an exclamation of astonishment and horror, Mr. Spenser threw on his dressing-gown, and rushed down stairs, where he found that part of the story was only too true; the worst part, however, being happily so much exaggerated, that there was the little old man himself to tell his tale, only

not yet recovered enough from his fright to relate his adventures very correctly. However, *there* he was, to vouch for the fact of his having been robbed ; and there was the athletic curate at his side, to verify the statement. Both were in a melancholy pickle, between rain and mire, though only the proctor had sustained any personal injury, and that was nothing affecting life or limb.

Maguire had been attacked by footpads, and the scene of the outrage had been the Black Castle, the spot which he had so often in his life passed in safety, but never without some apprehension or presentiment of danger. There it was that Randy Maguire, returning from Castle Dawson, and urging his little hack as fast as he could make it trot, past a locality so black and ominous, was set upon, flung from his saddle, rolled upon the road, and robbed of the old black-leather pocket-book, containing all his bank-notes, and also of the little bag in which he had bestowed the thirty new sovereigns in which Mr. Dawson had paid him

part of the arrears. This was nearly all Maguire knew about the matter ; the state of his clothes bore unquestionable testimony to a liberal rolling in the loose yellow soil of the country, but a scratch on the temple, with one or two not very serious bruises on the ribs, were the extent of his bodily damages. Oddly enough, his nose escaped scot-free, though it seemed to project from his face, as it were expressly to bear the brunt of whatever blows or damages were going. We have now to explain how the curate came to be involved in the events of a night, which in the regular course of events, he ought to have passed in his own house like a peaceable man and a good husband. He had been in the hills during the morning, on an expedition of charity, half pastoral, half medical, to visit the mother of one of his servants, an aged widow, who had been suffering with a rheumatism almost as old as herself. To gain the spot in the mountains where the poor woman lived, he had been obliged to cross the wooden bridge, which he

reckoned upon regaining at about five o'clock; and from thence a short hour, with those seven-leagued boots of his, would bring him to the "dulce domum." He arrived at the bridge, or rather the place where the bridge was not, about half-an-hour later than Colonel Dabzac and Mr. Trundle, and found himself, of course, in exactly the same perplexity. He must either return to the parsonage, abandoning the notion of reaching home that night, or try a shallow place higher up, which Mr. Trundle had not thought of, and which might chance to be still passable without much hazard, as enormous blocks of stone had been placed there for such travellers on foot as were nimble enough to jump over the ugly watery chasms between them. His homeward yearnings, always vigorous, made him choose the latter course, but when he gained the point where he hoped to cross, not a stone was to be seen; the water swelled and roared over the highest and hugest of the blocks, leaving him no alternative but to direct his steps (now not quite so brisk as before) all the weary

way to the house of his brother-in-law. It was indeed a severe march in such rain, accoutred so heavily as he was, with a club like that of his namesake, and a coat probably as ponderous as the skin of the Nemean lion. But the greatest weight was the weight on his mind, thinking what Carry would be suffering. The watery moon yielded a dim and uncertain light, but the curate, accustomed to nocturnal walking, could see the objects before and around him distinctly enough to discover any thing unusual, or suspicious, should any thing be stirring which ought not to be stirring at the place and season. The ruins, owing to the winding of the road, were not visible until he came quite close to them. A sharp turn disclosed them suddenly to his view, and two objects immediately arrested Woodward's attention ; one was a faint twinkling light through an orifice or loophole in the dilapidated building ; the other a figure on horseback, about fifty yards in advance of him on the road, apparently just

emerging from the shadow of the ruins. The next instant two fellows sprang out of them, rushed at the man on horseback, who rolled on the road, with one of his assailants over him. Woodward had no doubt about the character of the transaction. He rushed forward, brandishing his cudgel, and had the gratification of saluting one of the miscreants with so hearty a thwack, that the stick was fractured by the blow, and perhaps the bones it encountered were not more fortunate. That was matter for conjecture, for the fellow escaped into the ruins notwithstanding, and Hercules, instead of pursuing him, ran shouting to the aid of the assaulted traveller. Damaged as his club was, it would probably have given a second proof of its strength and toughness upon the person of the other footpad, had he waited the curate's onslaught ; which, however, he did not, but effected his retreat to the same asylum with his comrade, only to another corner of it. The first impulse of the brave clergyman was to pursue ; but a moment's

reflection convinced him of the rashness of doing so, weaponless as he was, while the robbers were probably provided with fire-arms, although, as yet, they had not thought proper to use them. When he first stooped down over the prostrate man, he concluded he was on the point of death, he moaned and gasped in so grievous a manner. Hercules elevated his head, and turning it so as to let such light as there was fall on the face, was equally distressed and astonished to ascertain (which he did at once by the features, particularly the nose, which was unmistakeable) that it was the tithe-proctor. Although the poor old fellow was more frightened than hurt, it took the curate a considerable time before he could get him on his legs, and quiet the agitation of his nerves, which shook so, that you could almost hear them vibrate. Woodward often said that he never in his life saw any thing so humorously tragical as the face of Maguire, when, thrusting his hand convulsively into an inside pocket, he discovered that he had saved

his life but lost his treasure. He fell back on the road in extremity of mental agony, and would probably have lain there till morning, had not the curate reminded him that the bandits were probably still within a stone's throw, and might possibly renew their attack. This succeeded;—the little proctor suffered his gigantic champion to raise him to his legs ; at some short distance they found the horse quietly nibbling the short mountain-grass, as if nothing extraordinary had occurred ; Mr. Woodward helped Maguire to mount, and they ultimately gained the parsonage in the manner already described.

Mr. Spenser, after listening in mute astonishment to all these painful details, conducted Hercules to a spare bed-room on the ground floor, and the servants took charge of the maltreated and still quaking proctor. Hercules (fairly exhausted by the incredible toils of the day) slept powerfully, as he did every thing, though still disturbed by thinking of his wife's anxieties, and all the un-

pleasant events of the night. The loss of so large a sum of money was too grave a matter to Mr. Spenser not to affect his repose very seriously. In strictness, it was true that his proctor (or his security) was liable to make good the sum lost; but the idea of enforcing his strict rights under such circumstances never occurred to the benevolent rector; and it would probably not have been very easy to enforce them, had be been so harshly disposed, the proctor being a very poor man, and his security a still poorer one! But there were other reasons stronger than the pecuniary ones that made Mr. Spenser feel extremely uncomfortable, in consequence of what had occurred.

At an early hour the following morning Hercules rose, literally "a giant refreshed," and made his way to the bed-side of his brother-in-law.

"This is a bad affair, Val," said the curate.

"Very bad indeed," said the rector, raising himself on his elbow. "It is not alto-

gether the loss, although I shall feel that too, but to think of a crime like this being committed in our peaceful neighbourhood, a quiet pastoral parish like this!"

"I know this country longer than you do, Val," said Woodward, "and my father knew it before me. The robbery of last night is probably the only outrage of the kind that has been perpetrated for the last hundred years, not only in this parish, but in this barony. Indeed, it is the first case I ever heard of in all Ireland, of a tithe proctor being robbed. They cut off their ears and noses, and make them eat their applotments, but they never rob them."

"Mrs. Spenser will never consent to live here after this," said the rector, despondingly; now touching the point that agitated him most, and paying little attention to the curate's *resumé* of the attentions usually paid to proctors.

"Fudge!" said the curate. "Fudge!"

"I know her better than you do," said Mr. Spenser.

"Keep it secret, then," said Hercules.

"A very good suggestion," said the rector. "I shall act upon it."

Concealment seemed not very difficult, as it was still early, and only one servant had been roused by the nocturnal disturbance. As to Maguire, he was still in his bed, and not likely very soon to leave it.

"Let us go to him," said Mr. Spenser; "he may stand in need of some of your medical skill. I only cure the soul; you cure both soul and body, Hercules."

"I'm a great hand at a bruise," replied Woodward, "and I have treated a simple fracture before now, — but if there's any thing worse, I'll leave it to Wilkins."

Between his robbery and his rheumatism, his bandaged forehead and his bizarre nose, his short cough and his deep groans, there was never such an odd patient as little Randy Maguire; and the oddity of the patient was well matched by the oddity of the doctor. The rector forgot his losses in the diverting contemplation of his curate and his proctor,

as the former, with his great hand, manipulated the other from head to foot, in search of breakages, and Randy squeaked, and in vain remonstrated, under the tentative process.

"No fractures," said Hercules, at length, desisting from his painful investigation, "but a good many bruises."

"I should think so," said the rector gravely, and no doubt implying that it could not well be otherwise, after the squeezing poor Randy had undergone in the vice of the curate's fist.

When his pains subsided a little, Maguire gave a prolix account of his adventures; but he concealed almost the only particulars which could have afforded a clue to the discovery of the criminals, being unwilling to mention the pack of cards, as his inveterate gambling propensities had frequently brought down upon him the censure of both the clergymen, particularly the curate, a lecture from whom was a serious affair. Besides,

Randy could not have told the whole truth on the subject, without involving Sydney, in some degree, as well as himself, which the proctor thought would neither be discreet nor handsome. He mentioned, however, the fact (of which the rector had not been aware before), that Sydney had been his companion on his journey to Castle Dawson, and bitterly lamented that he had not had the advantage of his protection on his return also. The rector expressed the same regret, and with a wonderful display of parental solicitude, put some questions to Maguire respecting his son, which the old man answered to the best of his knowledge.

Sydney was at that moment in the house, and in his bed, having returned about daybreak, without the cognizance of any of the family, save Lucy and Rebecca, the latter of whom observed him entering his chamber, as she was stealing back to her own, after the night's reading was over.

"Let us now go to breakfast," said Mr. Spenser to his brother-in-law. Hercules

obeyed with alacrity; but, before he left the room, he directed the servant who was in attendance to apply some brown paper, steeped in brandy, to the proctor's temples.

"He will probably roar like a bull," said the curate, "but never mind—apply the paper."

CHAPTER XX.

BREAKFAST.

"The love of woman is a tricksy spirit,
As full of arts and wiles as hate itself,
Deep plots to please, or subtle schemes to save us,
Still practising some kindly stratagem,
Or setting some fond snare."

NEW PLAY.

RAIN, rain, still rain—we are in for another day of it, beyond all question. It certainly did rain enormously in these Donegal mountains, and at the parsonage particularly, when it set about it. The very trout in the streams got too much of it. Down it came, doggedly, and wickedly, in a forest of small water-spouts, as if the Atlantic were hung up in the air to give the island a douche-bath. Three drops of the Redcross rain was enough to wet a middle-

sized man to the skin. The country-people were proud of it, as people always find something to be proud of—even their faults, or their misfortunes, sooner than be proud of nothing.

Think of another day of Mr. Trundle, his ship-canal, Loch Swilly, and the thirty millions! Mr. Spenser, indeed, had now sufficient to distract his mind without Mr. Trundle and the improvement of Ireland. Of this, however, his daughter Elizabeth knew nothing; so she came down to breakfast that morning full of a notable artifice to deliver her father from the fangs of his tormentor, who was already diligently studying his map to prepare himself to re-commence with effect the assault of the preceding evening.

"Mr. Trundle," she said, motioning him to sit beside her on a sofa at some distance from the table (probably the first time any lady so fair ever gave him such an invitation), "I want you to do me a very great favour;—but first, now, pray tell me candidly, shall you be very busy this morning?"

"Oh, my dear Miss Spenser," cried the little round man, in ecstacies, the more pleased at being thus accosted, as it was so new to him, "I am your humble servant for the whole day,—dispose of me as you please,—entirely at your service, and only too happy."

"Well, then, my dear sir," she continued, in the same very serious tone, "I'll tell you what you must do for me, if it is not too unreasonable,—you must give me a full account of your plan for establishing Small Loan Funds"—[the little black eyes of the agent here actually danced with glee]—"in connection with reading societies and lending libraries"—[here he jumped about]; "and that is not all—I am going to be still more exacting—you must draw out a plan expressly for myself, suited to the peculiar circumstances of this parish and neighbourhood, for it is really full time to have something of the kind here, and with your help —you, who are so great an authority—"

"I flatter myself," cried Mr. Trundle,

visibly swelling with consequence, and radiant with delight, looking like a triumphant cock-robin, "I do flatter myself I am an authority upon Small Loan Funds. Who was the first man that called public attention to the subject of Loan Funds? Humble me. Who was the first that ever established a Small Loan Fund in Ireland? Humble me. Who—"

He might have gone on for ever with this process of self-catechising, had not Elizabeth interrupted him by moving towards the breakfast-table, saying, while she winsomely took his arm, "Now remember, Mr. Trundle, you are *all* mine for the *entire* morning;" to which she internally added, "Now papa will be able to write his sermon."

Both the girls were much surprised when Mr. Woodward entered the breakfast-room with their father; but the accident to the bridge, and the vagrant habits of their uncle (the result of his enormous activity in the discharge of his duties), sufficiently accounted for his unexpected re-appearance.

Arabella seized an early opportunity of explaining to Colonel Dabzac that her uncle the curate was only her uncle by marriage. Elizabeth (far from being ashamed of a man who was an honour not only to the church but to human nature) paid him, as usual, every kind attention, supplied him liberally with tea, placed the sugar-bowl within his reach, and privately ordered a couple of turkey-eggs to be boiled for him, which, however, did not discourage that mighty breakfast-eater from also paying his addresses energetically to the pickled salmon and cold meats on the sideboard.

Dabzac was amused at the extent of the curate's devastation, but still more by seeing a tray with coffee, a quantity of toast, an egg, butter, marmalade, and a wing of a fowl, sent up to Mrs. Spenser, who was so great an invalid that she could not make her appearance. Rebecca was scarcely able to support the weight of the tray.

"I need not ask how Mag is this morning," said Mr. Woodward to the rector, who

smiled, and said that Mrs. Spenser had got a tolerably good night, and hoped in the course of the day to have the pleasure of receiving Colonel Dabzac and Mr. Trundle.

There was not much conversation, and the little that took place was not on an agreeable subject, for it related to Mr. Dawson. The curate's inquiries for Sydney led to the mention of that gentleman, and Colonel Dabzac, who had heard a report that he was likely to be returned to parliament for the borough of Rottenham, on the ultra-radical interest, spoke of him with a severity against which the curate thought himself bound to protest, though nobody present was more opposed to Dawson's politics than he was.

"He signed my Address to the Crown for the thirty millions," said Mr. Trundle, "so I ought to give him a good word, but I fear he is running through the remains of the property very fast."

"There's not much left to run through," said the colonel.

The curate made a remark to the effect that Dawson's embarrassments were not all of his own creation.

"My uncle," said Arabella, sneeringly, "thinks Mr. Dawson nothing less than an angel, because he once saved a boy from being drowned in Loch Erne."

"No, Miss Arabella, I do *not* think him an angel," rejoined Hercules, somewhat too vehemently, "I have not so high an opinion of any person of my acquaintance, whether a gentleman or a *lady;* but I do say that the man who saves the life of another at the risk of his own is a fine brave fellow."

"But it does not prove him a loyal man or a good Protestant," said Dabzac, coming to Miss Spenser's aid.

"Nor did I say that either, though I believe the majority of fine brave fellows are both," said Hercules, with quite too much energy for private life, though it would have done very well at a vestry.

Mr. Spenser smiled, but though he dis-

sented from his curate's last proposition he made no remark upon it.

"When we have drained Loch Erne, as I propose," said Mr. Trundle,—

"No more people will be drowned there," said Dabzac, finishing the sentence for him.

"Mr. Trundle has got a new argument for his project," said Mr. Spenser, gravely smiling (every body else laughed) at the little agent's ingenuity in turning the conversation into his favourite channel. However, he was soon cut short by the general rising from the table, when the self-sacrificing Elizabeth instantly pounced on him, as if he was the greatest prize in the world, and carried him off to the hall, there to have him "*all to herself*," for three or four miserable hours.

Mr. Spenser and Mr. Woodward retired to the library to consult together further upon the steps to be taken in consequence of the events of the night; so that Miss Spenser

and Colonel Dabzac had the field all to themselves for amusing or instructive conversation, for flirting, or love-making, at their discretion, or indiscretion, as the case might be.

CHAPTER XXI.

COURTSHIP AND HORSEMANSHIP.

"Light-winged toys of feathered Cupid."
OTHELLO.

You may say what you will of moonlights, and twilights, and sun-set hours, and summer evenings, for the occupation of love-making, but there is no time, or season, half so propitious for the purpose as a desperate wet day in a country house. If, under such circumstances, there is anybody to make love to, you must make it out of self-defence; simply because you have nothing else to do, unless you go to bed, or commit *felo-de-se*. See how Dabzac was situated! His host was in his library, at his private business; Elizabeth and her privy counsellor were trans-

acting their own affairs; there was no other resource but chatting, laughing, and flirting with Miss Spenser, and it was by no means a disagreeable alternative, particularly as the colonel could not but see that she had every disposition to chat, laugh, and flirt with him. You may say, why did not the colonel take a book, and sit down and read it in a corner, or on his back on a sofa. Now, would that have been exactly quite polite, unless the lady did the same thing, which in this case the lady did not do? But the idea of a lieutenant-colonel of the Londonderry Militia reading! The probability is that Dabzac had never read a book in his life—at least since he left college; no, not even a trumpery three-volume novel from a circulating library. He never thought of reading; he scarcely knew there was such a mode of passing, or killing time; he would scarcely have thought of taking a book, had he been sentenced to solitary imprisonment for life in the Vatican or Bodleian. No, he had positively no resource but flirtation. Now flirtation is not love-making, but it is a good in-

troduction to it. It is the skirmishing of the light troops, before the heavy brigades come up, and the action commences. They flirted sitting and standing, and walking up and down the room, sometimes round and round a conservatory, which communicated with the drawing-room. There was not a chair, couch, sofa, stool, any thing that could be sat on, or lounged on, which they did not chat and flirt on. They chatted of balls in Derry, and balls in Dublin; about the Rotunda, and the Castle, about diamonds, trains, feathers and lappets; then about horses and carriages, of all kinds and colours, subjects in which Arabella was knowing to a degree that astonished and captivated her gallant companion, who was only eloquent on such a theme as a hunter, or a curricle. Then they played back-gammon for a fit. Tired of back-gammon, they talked again, and by this time the colonel was beginning to think Arabella very pretty, and her hand particularly beautiful; he had seen a great deal of it during the back-gammon. The next thing was a discussion

on liveries. The Dabzac colours were white and scarlet, which Miss Spenser approved of highly. Then, passing the piano, she ran her white fingers coquettishly up and down the keys, and the colonel insisted on having one of the French chansons, which she sang so agreeably.

It was just the soul-less music to charm an empty man, and it had its effect decidedly in heightening flirtation into love-making. But what next?—there was still half-an-hour before luncheon. In a corner, on a pile of music-books and newspapers, Dabzac spied a battle-dore, but the shuttle-cock was not to be found—there was a chase and a rummage for it under the newspapers and music-books, and at length the shuttle-cock turned up, and very prettily did Arabella toss the feathered emblem of frivolity to and fro with her admiring play-fellow. It had only flown back and forwards twice and thrice, when there was a flash of light through the room —was it lightning? No,—it was the sun himself! Arabella flew to a window, and saw, with a delight only known to those

who have been cooped up for a week in a country-house, a clear rent in the clouds, through which the cheery flash had issued, with several still larger chasms near it, revealing the deep blue firmament, and proclaiming that the storm was over.

With still livelier joy, you may well imagine, were the same glad phenomena observed almost at the same moment by Elizabeth in the hall. Figure to yourself a dove escaping from the talons of a kite. Just so did Elizabeth spring from the side of Mr. Trundle to join her sister in the portico, where the warmth and dryness of the air assured them that the breaking up of the clouds was not merely partial or temporary, but a positive guarantee for a charming afternoon. A ride was proposed by Miss Spenser, and heartily seconded by Colonel Dabzac. Both were vain of their horsemanship, and each ambitious to shine in the other's eyes. Elizabeth acquiesced, even though it was to separate her from Mr. Trundle, who never rode for pleasure, and as

seldom as he could upon business either. The horses were ordered, and the girls went to put on their equestrian dresses. Mr. Trundle had agreed with Dabzac that they were not to protract their stay at the parsonage after the first appearance of fine weather; and he looked annoyed, and a little suspicious, when the colonel intimated his intention to continue Mr. Spenser's guest until after Sunday.

"The state of the roads, my dear fellow —recollect the state of the roads."

"I fear it is the state of something else," said little Trundle, laughing and giving the colonel a poke in the side.

"Never fear," said Dabzac, turning away. "All safe in that region; but Miss Spenser is a deuced fine girl, it can't be denied."

"But she is the daughter, you know, of a d—d Whig parson," said Trundle.

"And pray, Mr. Trundle, how have you passed the morning yourself?" asked the colonel. "Perhaps you thought nobody remarked *your* doings?"

"Come, come, colonel, that's too good—that won't do—as if you don't know very well what our *tête-à-tête* was about."

"If it was not about love," said the colonel, cruelly, as he left the room to put on his spurs, "it must have been about Loch Swilly."

Mr. Woodward, being a living barometer, had foreseen the improvement in the weather an hour before the change actually took place, and (provided with a new cudgel, in the place of that which he had broken on the pate or the ribs of the footpad) had started once more for Redcross. His conjugal affections were as staunch and orthodox as his religious opinions, and were always urging him homewards, while his rather latitudinarian philanthropy and benevolence impelled him to all points of the compass. Anxious, indeed, to appease his wife's solicitude, he had despatched a bare-footed envoy, at break of day, to assure her of his return that evening, *Deo volente*, without fail; and he was

already three good miles from the parsonage, when the horses were brought to the door.

Mr. Spenser, fond of exercise on horseback, jaded with confinement, and uneasy and dispirited by what had occurred, was easily prevailed on to ride with his daughters. However, he paid his wife a visit before he mounted his horse, and had the satisfaction of leaving her heartily dining on a fried sole and a boiled chicken, though she assured him her appetite was entirely a morbid and nervous one—in fact, one of the worst symptoms of her case.

You know nothing of highland glories, if you only see them in calm and sunshine. It is in the coming on and the passing off of showers, and clouds, and tempests, that the magnificence of the mountains is revealed. It still continued a little blustry, but not so much as to prevent the party from enjoying their ride extremely. Their route was superb, one which, gradually climbing the heights over the estuary, commanded the

scenery on the opposite side, and ultimately led to the verge of the cliffs over the ocean, whose agitation after so heavy a gale was always a spectacle of singular grandeur. The gradual uprolling of the mists, as the sun exhaled, or the breeze chased them, and the continual coming forth of one object after another, crags, trees, ruins, on the face of the hills, until only the tops remained, turbaned with white vapours, in wavy folds, sometimes transparent like gauze, charmed Mr. Spenser and Elizabeth, but were not much attended to by Arabella and her colonel. Here and there the vapours were obstinate, and clung with lazy tenacity alike to the bottom of the cliffs and the loftiest peaks, while the intermediate region was perfectly free.

"Not unlike what takes place," said the rector, "with respect to prejudice, which is the mist of the understanding ;—the middle classes are usually emancipated from them first ; their hold is much stronger at the base and in the high places of society."

"But, papa," said the bright girl on her prancing pony, "it is only a question of time and patience with mists of both kinds: the sun has only to shine a little longer, and the wind to assist him; then all will be clear from top to bottom. Look—the head of Knocknagoonagh is now quite uncovered."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Spenser, fond of following out such little analogies, "the triumph of truth and of free discussion—the sun and the wind—is eventually certain, and we must be patient, as you say; but it must not be the patience of inactivity or indifference, but the patience of virtuous perseverance, waging a perpetual, but tolerant and good-humoured conflict with bigotry and error."

Arabella and Mr. Dabzac were cantering on before, the road just here admitting of that agreeable pace. She rode well and looked particularly handsome and distinguished on her pretty brown jennet. The broad-brimmed round beaver hat became her extremely; her complexion was freshened by the air and motion, and the disorder into

which the puffs of wind threw her luxuriant hair, greatly improved its effect and beauty. Her passionate love of riding, and her fearlessness on horseback, gave her features more than usual animation. In short, Arabella Spenser was never seen to such advantage as in equestrian exercise, and Dabzac, alternately ambling or cantering at her side, never once recollected that after all she was the daughter of a liberal parson, the character which of all others he and his clique most abhorred. But what cares Cupid for political distinctions, he whose glory it is to confound every thing human, the high with the low, the rich with the poor, the brilliant with the dull, the virtuous with the unworthy, nay, even the lovely with the ill-favoured; not even respecting beauty itself, licentious leveller that he is, the only thorough-paced apostle of *égalité*. It is little to him to mingle the blood of Whig and Tory, to get up a match between a Spenser and Dabzac.

But to many an eye (though there was no eye that day to regard her with gallan-

try), Elizabeth, on her humbler steed, in her straw bonnet, coarse in material but graceful in form, would have been far more piquante. She was not so fond of riding as of walking, and preferred a mountain pony to a showy horse like her sister's ; still she carried herself well, not with the Amazonian air of Arabella, but with an easy, fearless, lady-like seat notwithstanding. The breeze brought out her rich colour also, and blew the curls of dark-brown hair about her shoulders, and sometimes into her eyes, making her bite her lip in pretty vexation, and often raise the whip-hand, without slackening her smart pace, to keep the rebel locks in subjection.

On they rode gaily, making for the summit that commanded the Atlantic, sometimes all abreast, sometimes in detachments, as when they started, while once or twice, just for a few moments, the girls were side by side, Mr. Spenser and his guest conversing together in advance of them. Mr. Spenser was not as animated and fluent as usual, and

Dabzac preserved the same air of grim cold civility, which he never laid aside in his intercourse with men, unless, perhaps, in the tumult of political conviviality, a dinner on the 12th of July, or a revel on the 5th of November. The rector liked him less and less every moment of their acquaintance, little dreaming that his daughter's feelings were of so very opposite a nature. When men of intellect and wit are damped and chilled by dull or uncongenial company, their conversation is apt to sink into a mere common-place, which, from any lips but their own, would excite their contempt and ridicule. Mr. Spenser began soon to be sensible that he was talking not only down to the colonel's mark, but even below it. The consciousness of this was uncomfortable, and it was a great relief to him when Arabella again joined Dabzac in a canter, and he was left once more with his younger daughter.

They soon reached a point that com-

manded a near and wide view of the ocean, and, having enjoyed for some minutes the magnificent spectacle of its agitation after the late storm, they turned their horses' heads homewards. Nothing occurred of importance during the ride, except that Arabella invited Colonel Dabzac to join them in a pic-nic party to the island already mentioned, proposing the following Monday for the expedition. Elizabeth was pleased at the prospect of resuming the island-scheme in her brother's absence, which promised to secure her against the intrusion of his friend Dawson; and Mr. Spenser never opposed any proposition upon which his daughters were agreed. Chatting of the necessary arrangements for the voyage of pleasure, they reached the parsonage, which they found in a state of confusion nearly as bad as that in which they had left the Atlantic. The secret of the robbery had been ill kept; it had reached Mrs. Spenser's ears with twenty frightful exaggerations; her husband found

her in the state that Tabitha Bramble calls "asterisks;" and Rebecca (at her wit's ends) informed him that a groom had been sent for Doctor Wilkins.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE SECRET WAS KEPT.

"You would pluck out the heart of my mystery."
HAMLET.

It was idle to think that a thing of the kind could possibly be kept secret very long, one of the servants being privy to it, and Randy Maguire, the chief actor, or rather sufferer in the transaction, being the most garrulous of men, at the most garrulous stage of life, and actually under Mr. Spenser's roof, confined to his bed with the effects of the outrage. But it was not Randy who broke faith with the rector. In fact, it was Mr. Woodward's careless directions to Cox, the butler, to steep some brown paper in brandy, and clap it on Randy's broken head, it was that

made all the mischief. The poor little proctor did roar like a bull, exactly as the curate had anticipated, the moment the smarting application touched him; and it unluckily happened that Rebecca was passing at the instant, on her way to the kitchen to make a toast for her mistress to take with her glass of Madeira. Now, Rebecca had the vice of curiosity (a vice in a lady's-maid, though so admirable a quality in a philosopher), to counterbalance, perhaps, the virtue of patience, which she possessed in so high a degree ; so she first tried to open the door, and failing in that (the cautious Mr. Cox having bolted it inside) she popped down her head to the key-hole, and was very much surprised, you may think, to see an old man in bed, writhing and bellowing in the hands of the butler, who was plastering his temples with something that seemed more piquant than was agreeable. Rebecca, of course, did not wait to be caught peeping, but went down to the kitchen, determined to get a full explanation from Cox, who was her declared

lover, at the earliest opportunity. The opportunity was not far off. As she returned up-stairs with the toast, Cox was just coming out of the room, having done his best to carry out Mr. Woodward's directions.

"What ails Mr. Maguire?" said Rebecca.

"Why, what should ail him," said Cox, "but that he's sleepy and fatigated after his long jaunt, and has got his old rheumatis that he has had as long as I've known him."

"And has he the rheumatis in his forehead?" said the maid, looking very sly.

"No, he hasn't," said Cox, "why should he?"

"Because you were putting a blister on it a minute ago," replied Rebecca.

"A blisther on it!" repeated Cox.

"Yes, and you needn't deny it, Mr. Cox, for I seen you with these eyes."

"Then your eyes were where they shouldn't have been," said the detected operator.

"Never mind," said Rebecca, "but tell me all about it this instant."

"I would if I could," said Cox, soothingly, "but it's a secret."

"Don't let mistress's toast get cold," said Rebecca, stamping her foot.

"Go along up with it, then," said the butler.

"Not till you tell me the secret, if the toast was to grow as cold as a lump of ice."

"It's a secret, I tell you."

"Much you know about keeping secrets," said Rebecca, "and, at all events, two can keep a secret better than one."

"Well, then, I don't like keeping a secret from you, Rebecca."

"Don't then, Mr. Cox."

A little sentimental bargain was then struck, upon consideration of which Cox covenanted to betray the confidence reposed in him. The engagement to break faith was better respected than the engagement to keep it, and Rebecca ran up to Mrs. Spenser's room, with the toast somewhat cold, but so full of the story of the Black Castle, that whatever scolding she got made very slight

impression on her. A tale of less harrowing import, she might have ventured to communicate herself; but she was an humble girl, and felt that the robbery of her master's proctor was an event that demanded an historian of higher mark. Escaping from her mistress, she flew to Miss M'Cracken. You may suppose the story was coloured blood-red by the time it reached Mrs. Spenser's ear. It was, in fact, another tale of the forty thieves, all but the jars and the suet.

Mrs. Spenser recalled all she had been hearing for several months of the insurrectionary state of the southern counties, concluded that the sanguinary warfare against the rights of the church had at length broken out in Donegal, and eventually (being well assisted,) worked herself into the hysterical state in which her husband found her on his return from riding. Perhaps there was no ringing of bells, and running to and fro with salts and tonics, and aromatic vinegar!

It was in vain the rector tried to quiet her nerves and her apprehensions. She was a woman utterly without self-command at any time, incapable of reasoning or being reasoned with; and besides, her husband's abortive attempt to conceal the occurrence from her, naturally made her incredulous now, when he tried to undo the effects of Miss M'Cracken's exaggerations, and reduce the affair to its proper level.

In the midst of all the hubbub, Sydney re-appeared. He had arrived indeed, as we have already stated, at an early hour in the morning (having pressed close on the heels of the unfortunate proctor), but being extremely fatigued, had retired instantly to his room, and to bed, where he would probably have lain till dinner-time, had not the confusion in the house prematurely roused him. Perhaps the first warm interest he ever took in the affairs of the family was upon this occasion. He felt exceedingly for poor Maguire, and was now seriously angry with himself for having parted company with

the old man on the previous morning, when he stood so particularly in need of a protector.

Randy went over the whole story again, not concealing from young Spenser what he had concealed from his father, namely, how he had been surprised counting the bank notes by the fellow who had been sent for the cards, and how he had also unguardedly disclosed to the same individual that his business at Castle Dawson was to receive the arrears of tithes.

"There's nothing in that," said Sydney; "the fellow you mean was Mr. Dawson's servant."

"He looked as if he never see'd a bank-note in all his born days before," said Randy.

"Possibly he never did," said Sydney; "but are you positive nobody else saw the money, or where you put it?"

"Nobody else knew nothing about it more than the child unborn," answered Maguire, "except your own self, Master Sydney, and

my bit of a niece, poor Maggy Maguire, at the inn, and she didn't see the beautiful yellow boys, and the illigant new Bank of Ireland notes, only the tattered ould provincials."

"Maggy didn't rob you, at any rate," said Sydney.

"Whoever did it was a cute chap," said Maguire, "howsomdever he got his intelligence, for he never went through the ceremony of axing where I kep the money, but in with his fist into the right place at onst, as if it was his own pocket the thief was ransackin."

"That's an important circumstance," said Sydney; "but now, Randy, I must leave you. Take care of yourself, and to-morrow, or next day, you'll be as well as ever you were."

"Oh, it's all over with me on this side of the grave," grunted the old man; but he had been uttering the same grunt for the last ten years, so Sydney paid it very little attention.

Leaving Maguire's room, the first person he met with was his sister Elizabeth, who

had not yet taken off her riding-dress. Sydney was dressed in the gay green coat which Dawson had made him a present of. Elizabeth did not ask him how he came by it, for she knew only too well. In the gentlest possible way, however, she reproved her brother for having so abruptly left home, and so long absented himself from it. She never mentioned Dawson's name, but Sydney knew that she aimed at him, and he eulogised his friend more warmly than ever. He was armed now with the fact that the Dawsons had fully discharged their pecuniary obligations to his father; and to that, of course, Elizabeth had no answer to make, only she thought it strange that a man should be made so much of because he paid a just debt of very old standing; and she intimated this opinion distinctly.

"No," cried her brother, "it was no debt of Dudley's at all;—it was his father's debt, not his; his conduct is the most honourable that was ever heard of; but you and Arabella are prejudiced against him, and for no

reason in the world but that he smokes a cigar now and then, and wears a green coat."

"For which reason, I suppose," interrupted Elizabeth, archly, "he has transferred his green coat to you."

"What if he has?" rejoined her unmannered brother, almost fiercely.

"Only this," said Elizabeth, with spirit, "that both Arabella and I like to see you dressed like a gentleman—not like Mr. Dawson."

"Oh, indeed," said Sydney.

"And the companion of gentlemen," added his sister, with energy.

"I am not going to consult you in the choice of my companions," cried the petulant young man, raising his voice; "but Dudley will be a member of Parliament in the course of a week or two, and then, perhaps, you will change your tune."

"The last piece of elegance from Castle Dawson!" cried Elizabeth; and glowing with vexation, she turned contemptuously away from her infatuated and rude brother,

murmuring audibly as she went,—"A member of Parliament, indeed,—will that make him a gentleman?"

Sydney went chafing to his own room, where with the passion that youth of his temperament has for fire-arms and ammunition, he first employed himself in cleaning his gun and remaining pistol, polishing the barrels, and seeing that he was well provided with caps and with ball-cartridges. Then he wrote and despatched a letter to Dawson, to acquaint him with what had occurred, and request him to come over to the parsonage at his earliest convenience, and bring the pistol with him, which would no doubt be found in the room where Sydney had slept, or in the drawing-room where they had amused themselves riddling the fire-screens. This done, the young man made a more careful toilette than usual (partly in honour of Colonel Dabzac, and partly to avoid Elizabeth's displeasure), and went down to dinner.

A dull, distracted dinner it was; the whole

evening indeed was a wretched one. Mr. Spenser was unable to pay the ordinary attentions to his guests, and Mr. Trundle had no one to listen for five minutes consecutively to his projects. All was at sixes and sevens ; nothing but running up-stairs and down-stairs ; ordering and counter-ordering, mixing draughts, preparing baths, and charging stone-bottles with hot-water. Every quarter of an hour some new crotchet got possession of Mrs. Spenser's noddle, and at last she sent for her husband, and insisted on his sending to the nearest police-station, and getting an armed party to garrison the parsonage. Mr. Spenser, reminded of "Hamilton's Bawn," suspected shrewdly that either Miss M'Cracken or Rebecca had suggested this idea; a dashing green serjeant would be such an agreeable addition to the company in the servants' hall. But there was no use in remonstrance—the rector was compelled to sit down, and in his wife's presence write to the police-officer in command (with whom he was acquainted)

requesting the loan of a couple of his men for a night or two. The request was granted (the county being in fact so notoriously tranquil that it mattered little how the police were distributed), and before it was dark, three tall handsome fellows in dark green uniforms, with glittering muskets on their shoulders, and short swords by their sides, were marched into the rectory; and well-pleased they were to get into such snug quarters, for they had a capital supper with the domestics, good warm beds to mount guard in, and such fun and flirtation with the house-maids that the noise of the merriment occasionally reached the library and the tea-table.

Miss M'Cracken, of course, scorned the festivities of the kitchen, above which, indeed, her manners as well as her education raised her; but Rebecca, as soon as she had bundled the young Spensers to bed, which she did as fast as the processes of untrousering and unfrocking could be accomplished, hastened to join the rest of the household in

entertaining the constabulary, and made herself extremely agreeable to every one but Mr. Cox, who thought she might just as well have remained in the nursery darning stockings, or with Lucy reading "Clarissa."

The police, however, did not satisfy Mrs. Spenser. She must have the lower windows of the house blocked up and barricaded; the carpenter must be sent for without a moment's delay. To this Mr. Spenser good-humouredly demurred, observing that with three armed policemen, and a lieutenant-colonel to head them, all danger was out of the question; but the moment his back was turned, his wife sent for the artificer in wood, (who lived hard by the glebe), on her own responsibility, and actually had an interview with him at the side of her bed, and instructed him to put the lower part of the house into as complete a state of defence as possible.

The circle round the tea-table were not a little astonished and diverted when the village Vauban tapped at the door of the

library, and asked permission to enter and commence the fortifications. However, it was absolutely necessary to give Mr. Chip something to do, that the noise of his hammer should resound through the house, and accordingly Mr. Spenser took him into the back hall and set him to make a large wooden case for a parcel of books which he was going to send up to Dublin to be bound. When the carpenter sent in his bill some time afterwards, one of the items ran thus—"for fortifications, including a box for books, seven-shillings and six-pence."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAWSON IN SOCIETY.

Sydney did not expect to receive an answer from his friend for some days, but he received a reply the following morning by the hands of his own messenger, who found Dawson at home.

Dawson's letter was only too cordial and energetic. The robbery astonished him more than any thing that had ever happened in the country, and he pledged himself to strain every nerve, and spare neither fatigue nor expense, to drag the perpetrators of this sacrilegious and abominable crime to light. The sacrilege was what Dawson thought so especially atrocious.

He would drive over to the parsonage im-

mediately, for in such a case the loss of a moment might be irreparable. Nor was this all; he proceeded to express a hope that, should the loss of so considerable a sum happen to be the slightest immediate inconvenience to Sydney's father, he would not forget that he had a friend at Castle Dawson, who, while he had a shilling in his pocket, would only be too proud and too happy to accommodate him.

Such was the tenor of the letter, more remarkable for its warmth than its delicacy, particularly the offer of accommodation, but it was written on the spur of the moment, and at all events not likely to find a very severe critic in Sydney Spenser.

Dawson kept his word (as he always did religiously, when it suited his purposes) and arrived the next day at the parsonage in a curricle, drawn by a pair of showy grays, an equipage intended, no doubt, to make a lively impression on Elizabeth Spenser, but which only succeeded in dazzling Miss M'Cracken and Rebecca. Sydney was

anxious about his pistol, but Dawson reported that it had not been found.

"Is it possible," said Sydney, "that by mistake that surveyor or the strolling artist—"

Dawson laughed unpleasantly at the suggestion, but thought it unlikely that any such mistake had occurred. Sydney left him to dress for dinner.

Not a word of intimation had either Mr. Spenser or his daughters received of this unwelcome addition to their circle. You may imagine how great was the surprise and displeasure of the girls, when, entering the drawing-room, they found Mr. Dudley Dawson amongst the guests. There was another increase to their party in the person of Mr. Oliver, the rector of a neighbouring parish, a profoundly grave man, who spoke extremely little, and only to draw other people out, particularly Mr. Spenser, whom he enthusiastically admired. When he heard any thing that particularly surprised, or amused him, his eye expressed it by a peculiar twinkle, but he seldom opened his lips when the company exceeded three or four people.

I must try to paint Dawson again, as he appeared on the present occasion, accoutred, it is to be supposed, rather to kill ladies than catch thieves. Take one of those stuffy, pigeon-breasted lay-figures, on whose backs the tailors of Cheapside and the Strand advertise their "fashionable attire;" clothe it in one of their flashiest blue coats with blazing gilt buttons, and let the coat hide as little as possible of a white satin waistcoat, flowered with enormous peonies; let the trousers be the glossiest black, disclosing at the feet silk stockings of a fiery flesh colour, the toes concealed by a square inch of varnished leather, the only visible portion of what is presumed to be a shoe; stud the all-too-beruffled shirt with three massive diamonds, probably not from Golconda; then whisker your figure at the hair-dresser's next door to the tailor who supplied the coat; perfume it with musk, or essence of lavender; feed it at the oyster-shops and Haymarket restaurants, until the cheeks become red and bloated; carbuncle the fingers with rings and the nose with brandy-and-water; then

inflate it with prodigious self-conceit ; animate it with a spirit of Brummagem patriotism,—any desperate nonsense will do for a political creed, any slang dictionary will furnish a vocabulary,—there is Dawson for you, as he approached with a strut and a wriggle to pay his homage to the fair Spensers, the elder of whom, certainly, returned his salute with as much contumelious disregard as a clever actress with long study could throw into a glance and a curtsey. The younger, who most disliked him, testified her aversion less, and the coxcomb had the egregious folly to construe in his own favour the mere well-bred suppression of Elizabeth's repugnance.

The table-talk was not the most interesting : there was talk, but no conversation. Those who cannot even talk are too small a minority; and Dawson was not one of them. He talked loud and big ; making laborious efforts to appear at his ease, while manifestly out of his element in refined society, and also betraying by the incoherence of his observations and the excitement of his manner, a pre-occupation of mind, not uncommon,

indeed, in men living from hand to mouth, and heirs apparent to estates in chancery. As to the robbery, Dawson talked more feelingly than if he had been robbed himself; he spoke of blowing up the Black Castle with gunpowder, and agreed with Sydney to ransack it the next day armed "from top to toe." He was of great service to Colonel Dabzac in the eyes of the rector and his second daughter. Dabzac, though only a stiff, grim, vacant, well-dressed nobody, was a gentleman in appearance as well as position; he was no adventurer, or roué; his knowledge and love of horses was that of a squire, not of a black-leg; and, besides, he was disposed to taciturnity, an excellent gift in men who have no bank to draw upon for pleasant discourse. He looked to great advantage beside the presuming, swaggering, restless Dawson, who, if he had only had the tact to sit still in his chair, and hold his tongue, would have been only one half as disagreeable as he actually was. Even Mr. Trundle rose in estimation from the same cause; better loan-funds and Loch Swilly

to all eternity than Dawson's gross politeness, heartless cordiality, and the continual effort to conciliate, which had only the effect of thoroughly disgusting every body. Mr. Spenser was not the man to have such a guest at his table; he neither knew how to silence, or how to talk to him. He would fain have shunned politics, but the conversation became political in spite of him. Dawson began by admitting that the Repeal of the Union was all gammon; that good measures were all the Repealers wanted, and when asked why they raised that exciting and dangerous cry, if their real object was only to carry some minor points, he made a very lame attempt to shuffle out of the difficulty; said that the more people asked the more they got, and compared it to the practice of lawyers who lay the damages in an action at twenty thousand pounds, when they only expect, and would be perfectly content with a verdict for perhaps a fortieth of the sum. Mr. Spenser shook his head, and then Dawson protested that he did not mean to justify the principle; on the contrary, he admitted

it to be highly objectionable ; he was always himself an advocate for plain-dealing, and would be one to the end of the chapter.

Mr. Oliver's eye twinkled more than once during this speech of Master Dudley's.

The Church having been mentioned, Dawson pronounced a high-flown eulogy upon that institution to captivate Mr. Spenser, who would not have said half so much himself in praise of it. Observing that he had over-done this a little, he declared that the Church had monstrous abuses, not a doubt of it,—it was monstrous that any Christian Church should cost the nation two millions *per annum*. Here the eye of Oliver twinkled more than before.

"Two millions, Mr. Dawson!" said Mr. Spenser, smiling.

"Scarcely a fourth of the sum," said Colonel Dabzac, with dry asperity, and not so much looking at the person whose observation he noticed.

Then Dawson drew in his horns, and showed his perfect willingness to estimate the wealth of the Church at any figure the

company thought reasonable; after which he added, that if every clergyman in the establishment was only one-tenth part as charitable and exemplary in every relation of life, public and private, as the rector of the parish of Redcross, "far from thinking two millions a-year a single farthing too much, he would vote with all his heart to quadruple the sum."

Mr. Spenser could not but say that he was much flattered by this speech, offensively impertinent as it was.

"I only say what everybody in the world will swear to," proceeded Dawson, still more brazenly, "and what's more, Mr. Spenser, if the parish was polled this moment, you'd be the biggest bishop in Ireland to-morrow morning by universal suffrage."

You may fancy how this effusion made the eye of the silent parson quiver with merry meaning.

"Not the biggest," said Mr. Spenser, trying to smile at what revolted him so thoroughly, and devoutly wishing that Dawson had continued a tithe-defaulter, since the settlement had made him (the rector) nothing

the richer, while the non-payment had the effect of keeping at a distance a man, whose style of conversation, like his style of living, was so very discordant from that of civilised people.

Dawson rose from his wine only too soon. This was a piece of affectation like the rest of his behaviour.

The conversation after he retired naturally turned upon *modesty*, and the rector said "he feared it would be found that the *assumption* of modesty thrives better in the world than the genuine quality itself. Assurance in the mask of humility carries all before it. It is in life," he added, "as in jumping; you must fall back in order to spring forward, but you must be careful not to fall back too far. Backwardness overdone may be as fatal as excessive forwardness. There is an art in this as in every thing else."

"You would seem to give a Machiavellian turn," said Mr. Oliver, "to the divine precept, as if we were directed to take the lower seats, *in order* that the host should desire us to go up higher." This was a long speech

for Mr. Oliver, and took up a considerable time, for he spoke with the utmost gravity and deliberation, as if pronouncing judgment in a case of life and death.

"The words *do* in strictness bear that meaning," said Mr. Spenser, "but it is only one of many cases where worldly wisdom coincides with heavenly. The man of the world succeeds best by conforming to the line of Christian conduct. The precept you quote hits the true mean between self-exaltation and undue self-abasement. We are commanded to take the lower seats, but still among the guests, not to go down below the salt."

"There is not much occasion," said Dabzac, "to preach the danger of excessive modesty in this country."

"Perhaps not," said the rector, "yet I know no people who, speaking of them nationally, are so deficient in the virtue or faculty of accurate self-measurement,—who are so distrustful of their own strength when they are really strong, and so apt to be over-confident exactly when they ought

to be humble. I know no country where there is so much spurious modesty and at the same time so much ill-acted assurance; where the man who is conscious of superiority is so absurdly backward to assert it, and where men of no mark make such ludicrous efforts to seem of consequence."

"How is it to be explained?" said Mr. Oliver.

"I should have to write the history of Ireland to answer you," said the rector.

"No man could do that better," said Mr. Oliver with his great solemnity, "I wish you would undertake the work."

"I have neither industry, nor I fear, *conscience* enough for such an undertaking," replied the rector, smiling. "'There goes a great deal of conscience to the writing of a history,' as Brown observes truly in the *Religio Medici*."

"There ought to go," said Oliver, couching his remark in the fewest possible words.

"I feel," continued Mr. Spenser, "that, like Hume, I should find it too troublesome to rise from my sofa to hunt for an authority;

or, like Vertot, when he wrote his history of the Knights of Malta, and received the valuable information about the siege, after he had composed the account of it with scarce any materials. '*Ma foi, mon siége est fait*,' said the easy Frenchman. The facts came too late!"

Oliver smiled gravely, and repeated his opinion that a history of Ireland by his friend would be a most desirable accession to literature.

"I wrote one history," said Mr. Spenser, "and I do not think I shall ever write another."

"What was that?" said Mr. Oliver.

"A history of Higgledy-Piggledy," said the rector. "You shall have it to read, if you think it worth your while; I'll give it to you in the course of the evening, and you may put it in your pocket, or in the fire."

Oliver's face beamed with delight. They rose and followed Mr. Dawson to the tea-table. Had you seen Dawson enter the drawing-room that evening, you would have perceived how little accustomed he

was to such apartments. He threw himself down on the chair nearest to where Elizabeth was sitting, and (mitigating his stable-yard tones as much as he could) commenced by repeating the gross piece of flattery about the bishopric which he had delivered himself of in the dining-room ; adding, that her father was the most charming man he had ever known, and what a pity it was such a man should be banished to a country parish in the wildest part of Ireland. Then he spoke of Sydney as the finest, noblest, cleverest, handsomest, most promising fellow in the world, and said magnificent things about friendship, like a Pylades talking of an Orestes. His next move was to ask Elizabeth whether she did not sing ; when she replied in the negative, he felt certain that she was at least an instrumental musician, and hoped she would play something, which was, of course, respectfully declined. Then he reconnoitred with his eye-glass the inch of patent-leather at the points of his shoes, and talked of dances and balls ; making such hash of his wills and shalls, woulds

and coulds; such perpetual use of the words elegant, splendid, tremendous, and thrilling; and now and then, also, on the very point of rapping out an adjuration, arresting himself so seasonably at the "by,"—that Elizabeth was a little amused, though much annoyed, by his conversation. However, she was happy to escape to Mr. Oliver and the tea-table, and she kept Dawson at an immeasurable distance for the rest of the evening. Though not very thin-skinned, he could not but feel that he was not eminently successful in the drawing-room; but he had vanity enough to support him under still greater discouragements: nay, he formed that very night, for the first time, a deliberate scheme for the conquest of Elizabeth Spenser, far less, however, by gaining her affections (of which, indeed, he could have had but a slender hope) than by the use of influences and instrumentalities much more at his command than the art of captivating the heart of an amiable woman.

Dawson professed himself a passionate admirer and worshipper of beauty. Had he

been so in reality, he would not have been the gross sensualist that he was. "There is no more potent antidote," says Schlegel, "to low sensuality, than the adoration of beauty; but there are souls to whom even a vestal is not holy."

He had the shrewdness not to attempt again upon that occasion to break through the rampart of formality and coldness behind which the resolute girl entrenched herself; he had even the skill to assume a distant but profoundly respectful manner towards her, permitting Colonel Dabzac and even Mr. Trundle to perform little acts of attention which he might have performed himself without the imputation of forwardness.

But if he wanted admirers in the drawing-room, he was more successful elsewhere. More than once in the course of the evening Rebecca crept to the door, and found opportunities for peeping in and feasting her eyes upon the white satin waistcoat, strewed with red peonies, and the dazzling toes of Mr. Dawson's shoes. She gave such a report of

his splendour to Lucy, that it was with difficulty the latter controlled her inclination to slip down and enjoy the same spectacle in the same clandestine way; but it was against her system to demean herself without a sufficient motive, so she not only restrained her curiosity, but lectured Rebecca for peeping, and told her sharply that she would have been better employed teaching the children their catechism, or putting them to bed. Rebecca took the latter part of the hint without delay, and then hastened to the kitchen, where she enraged Mr. Cox exceedingly, by dancing a jig before supper with one of the policemen.

Mr. Dawson certainly did exhibit amazing vigour in the rector's service the following day; he started with young Spenser and one of the police-constables in quest of the robbers at daybreak, provided with arms of various kinds, a hamper of provisions, and a powerful and ferocious bull-dog, to whose society Sydney was not a little partial, and of whose exploits he had wonderful things to tell.

Sydney was active and brave. The prospect of a raid through the hills was just the thing to excite to the highest pitch a boy of his turbulent disposition, and who plumed himself so much on his animal strength. However, nothing came of that day's expedition; Sydney wanted to explore the Black Castle, but his comrade thought it would be mere waste of time to do so, so they contented themselves with scouring the country between the parsonage and Castle Dawson, diverging here and there into the wild glens to the right and left of the road, but not getting a shot the live-long day at any thing more important than a hare.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. SPENSER'S ACCOUNT OF THE ISLAND OF HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY.

"In the Commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; no use of service;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil,
No occupation; all men idle, all,
And women too." THE TEMPEST.

THE grave Mr. Oliver, enthusiastic about every thing that Mr. Spenser said, or did, thought he would never be permitted to retire soon enough, so anxious was he to peruse the paper which the rector put into his hands on the night recorded in the foregoing chapter. Putting on his spectacles and his *robe-de-chambre*, and establishing himself in a great chair with his feet on the fender he read as follows.

"Higgledy-Piggledy is an island in 96 deg. 0 min. 0 sec. south longitude, and 396 deg. 70 min. 3 sec. west latitude, as laid down in the maps of the Swiss Admiralty, from the accurate surveys of the Great Chartists. Its place on the globe is almost the antipodes of the *Insulæ Fortunatæ*. Strabo has not mentioned it, probably, because he was ignorant of its existence; and the silence of Malte-Brun in later times may plausibly be accounted for upon the same hypothesis.

"The island is so called from the Higgledies, who constitute the smaller and wealthier part of its population, and the Piggledies, who constitute the greater and poorer portion. The Piggledies again derive their name probably from 'pig,' either because that animal abounds amongst them, or because in its character and general habits it resembles them very strikingly. In fact, it is a common saying that there is nothing so like a Piggledyman as a pig, and nothing so like a pig as a Piggledyman.

"The country is divided into four provinces, called Bluster, Funstir, Spunster, and

Donaught. Funstir is the finest and most remarkable ; what a pleasant land it is, you may conclude from its appellation ; the Piggledies have it nearly all to themselves, and it includes the celebrated and eccentric district or shire of Topsiturvia, where, in peaceable times, the people are always in insurrection, but, when rebellion is afoot, they are actual models of good behaviour. Spunster, the northern part of the island, is the province where the Higgledies are found chiefly. Many of them are as gay fellows as the Topsiturvians themselves; but others are as orderly and shabby as any population can be,—low industrious creatures, who work for their bread, generally at weaving, or spinning, whence comes probably the name of the province.

"The metropolis of Higgledy-Piggledy is the great city of Hubbub, in the neighbourhood of which is held annually, about the time of the summer solstice, the elegant festival of Brokenhead, corresponding to the Olympic games amongst the barbarous Greeks.

"The Piggledies lodge for economy in the

sties erected for their swine, and they live upon a certain root, which they are so passionately fond of, that they prefer the risk of starvation to propagating any other. Although a certain mixture of blue and yellow is the colour of the nation, they cannot abide it in crops, and a Piggledyman will cultivate even nettles and ragweed rather than turnips or mangold-wurzel. There is corn grown in many places,—wheat, because the climate is singularly unfit for it, and oats and barley, not to make the vulgar article of bread, but for the wiser and nobler purpose of extracting from these grains a certain liquor, which has a marvellous effect on the eyes, making the drinker see objects twice over, so that all the blessings of Providence seem doubled, and man is, of course, doubly grateful and twice happy.

"The ancient constitution of Higgledy-Piggledy was a Mixed Anarchy, a form of government on which De Lolme is strangely silent, and of which Locke says nothing. But it was a glorious constitution notwithstanding, and, if not 'the envy of surround-

ing nations,' it might certainly have been said to be 'one of the wonders of the world.' At all events, the Higgledy-Piggledidians enjoyed under it for many a century a degree of happy confusion, such as no other country in the world has ever been blessed with; and as it promoted all the great objects of misrule and merriment, their devotion to it is not very difficult to understand.

"Up to the beginning of the present century, the island had a sort of a legislature of its own, not extremely unlike the British Parliament in form, called the National Harem-Scarem. Marvellous things are recorded of the Harem-Scarem of Higgledy-Piggledy, which the Higgledies kept all to themselves, with all its profits and honours, in order that the Piggledies, by their efforts to get into it also, might never want a motive to keep the country in its normal state of uproar and disorder. At length a more powerful neighbouring state, the Whitelanders, envious of the prosperity of the people of Higgledy-Piggledy in the posses-

sion of this inestimable domestic treasure, determined to rob them of it, and actually committed the robbery about the beginning of the present century To the Higgledies this was perhaps a serious blow, but the Piggledies might have been expected to have rather rejoiced than grieved at it. The contrary, however, took place. The Piggledies have been howling like maniacs from that day to this for the restoration of their native Harem-Scarem, an assembly into which they were never suffered to put their snouts; and although they cannot justly complain that the stronger state has inflicted many good laws, or afflicted them with much good government, yet nothing will content them but to have the mismanagement of their own affairs in their own hands, the indefeasible right of *self-misrule*, or (as their demagogues sometimes express it)—'*Higgledy-Piggledy for the Higgledy-Piggledymen!*'

"There are two codes of laws in the island, one the dullest system imaginable, diametrically opposed to public opinion, at least, to the public opinion of the Piggledies, the

other called the code of Topsiturvia, the work of an illustrious native of that part of the island, who may be considered as the Numa, the Zoroaster, or the Moses of Higgledy-Piggledy.

"The courts by which this admirable code is administered are held, like the Areopagus of old, by night, or in the dark; nothing can be simpler, cheaper, or more expeditious than their processes; they bring justice to every Higgledy gentleman's hall-door; in fact every thing is done by the plaintiff himself; he is prosecutor, witness, judge, jury, and executioner, by which it is inconceivable what a saving is effected both of time and money; and so uninfluenced by personal feelings are those august tribunals, that even after judgment in capital cases, the traverser is allowed to appear by his attorney or agent, and is shot, or otherwise executed by *proxy*.

"Whenever the Piggledies have the power, they proceed against the Higgledies (who are generally the nominal lords of the soil), according to Topsiturvian law. On the

other hand, the Higgledies, when they have the advantage, take care to cite the Piggledies before their own judges, and try them by their own formal, tedious, and ruinously expensive system. However, when the object is to regain possession of the soil, the processes of Higgledy justice are rapid enough in all conscience, nearly as swift and *mortal* as those of the other code.

"One of the strangest things connected with the state of the law in the island is a system they have, by which the bulk of the soil is vested in a high legal functionary, corresponding with our Chancellor. In fact, the entire island may be said to be 'in Chancery,' and the general state of tillage is exactly what might be anticipated from such a droll arrangement, for, except the process of *draining*, what branch of agriculture can any court, either of Law or Equity, have a *practical* acquaintance with?

"There are two religions in the island, the Piggledy religion established in fact, and the Higgledy religion established in law; the opposition of law to fact being an admirable

provision for keeping the country in that highly comic and convulsive state, without which it would not be worth living in. Indeed they draw largely upon their religious institutions for what they consider the prime comfort of existence ; and in this they are highly to be commended, inasmuch as religion, no doubt, ought to constitute the happiness of every people. The great temple, or state pagoda of the island, only frequented by the Higgledies, though supported at the cost and charges of the Piggledy-men, is a gorgeous and astonishing pile ; it stands on the edge of an awful precipice, and is in the singular form of a cone, or sugar-loaf, turned upside-down, the broad summit representing its ample possessions, the small point in contact with the earth being perhaps emblematic of the small fraction of the community which enjoys its benefits. Nothing can be more terrific, seen at a distance, than this strangest of edifices that the hand of man ever raised. Foreigners who visit the island shudder to think of such a dangerous pile overhanging them and threatening to

topple on their heads every moment. But this state of unstable and perilous equilibrium is what charms the people themselves, and particularly the Piggledies, who might long since have reversed the fabric and placed it on its base, had such been their will and pleasure. As to the Higgledies, their zeal in defence of the sacred structure is perfectly natural, for they must take it as it is, or forego its advantages altogether. They are always fidgetty about its safety, and keep a vast army on foot ready at a moment's warning to surround the building and prop it up with their lances and spears.

"The vernacular language of the country is a sort of dialect between high Bluster and common Rigmarole. It is so highly figurative that it is found to be almost impossible to state facts, or convey simple truth in it. The accent is also a mixed one, something between a roar and a whine, which makes it excellent either to bully or beg in. You may fancy what a Babel the isle is, particularly in the chief cities, where the most notorious whiners and bawlers congregate.

"Besides Hubbub, the metropolis, there are other important towns, for instance Riotville on the mighty river Trash, and Hocus-Pocus on the banks of the Drivel. In every town there is a great chamber, or senate-house, called Balderdash Hall, and the loudest and longest speaker is the Demosthenes of the place. The principal subject of discussion is always the restoration of the Harem-Scarem; but when strangers demand of the Piggledies, what the Harem-Scarem did for them when they had it, or what they expect it would do for them, if they had it again, not an orator of them all has a word to answer; but so much the worse for the interrogator, for he is sure to be bespattered with mire from head to heel, and runs a serious risk of being flung bodily into the Trash, or the Drivel.

"Being a proud and haughty people—most of them descended from kings, and not a man of them who is not a gentleman born—they generally despise trade. In their cities you will see but few cheese-mongers, or fish-mongers; but some branches of industry

find more favour with them; there are enough of news-mongers and grievance-mongers, these occupations not being deemed disparaging to their gentility, on which no people plume themselves so much. You are not to suppose, however, that there are no degenerate, low-minded creatures amongst them, who use their heads for thinking, and their hands for working, more than their tongues for talking. There are several such perverse, poor-spirited people, sprinkled over the island, but they are in a wretched minority, and are despised, as they deserve to be, pretending to be better than their neighbours, and not having the patriotism to conform to the genius and character of the country.

"So thoroughly averse to commerce is Higgledy-Piggledy in general, that the most popular cry in the island is for the total destruction of the only branch of commerce open to them, the exportation of their own superfluous food, for they raise food in enormous quantities, the soil being as fertile as any in the world. Nothing enrages the orators at Balderdash Hall more

than the spectacle of a drove of pigs going to market, or a sack of corn sold to a foreign merchant. They insist upon cramming the farmers with their own bacon, and would throw the corn into the Drivel sooner than see it exported abroad. Nor is this school of political economy confined to the Piggledy provinces. Many of the Higgledies take the same wise views of the interests of the public. Indeed, this is one of the few points upon which the orators of both races concur in opinion, but as their agreement in this respect tends to promote the general happy confusion, it must be regarded as a fortunate circumstance; and the great pity is, that both parties have not their old Harem-Scarem back again, that they might have to say, that, for once, they acted cordially together, and *ruined* their country *in concert.*

"It ought to be mentioned that the Higgledies of Hubbub have a hall of their own, like their poor fellow-citizens. It is a vast round building, which perhaps accounts for the frequency with which Higgledy debaters argue in a circle. The prevailing mendicant turn

of all classes, Higgledies as well as Piggledies, will sufficiently explain another of their logical characteristics, namely the habit of begging the question. In short, the round building we speak of is named with justice the Temple of Twaddle. Faction, Fanaticism, and Fashion preside there in turns, and there the general congresses of all the States in Noodledom are holden annually, about the time of the vernal equinox.

"At Balderdash Hall is to be seen one of the greatest curiosities in the whole country, an enormous engine (said to be of forty-ass power) for keeping the island constantly in *hot water*. The hot water, however, is not for the purpose of bathing or ablution, for there are no public baths, and cleanliness is not one of the besetting virtues of the people. It is a political and social institution altogether, and has hitherto worked admirably, to the great credit and content of the engineers.

"There is a famous Castle in Hubbub, for the possession of which the Higgledies and Piggledies are for ever squabbling, and in truth it seems of no great use except as

a bone of contention between them. The Castle itself is in the possession of the Whitelanders, the same people who formerly plundered the island of that wise and virtuous legislature which was once its glory. The Whitelanders commit the fortress from time to time to the custody of some great giant, who is occasionally, but *not often*, a wizard also. The giants of Hubbub Castle had such indifferent characters in former days, that one of the wits of Higgledy-Piggledy is reported to have said that their deeds ought to be found recorded in the history of Rapin(e). However, the more giant-like the giant, he pleases the people the better, for he keeps the fun stirring which they love so dearly. When he is more wizard than giant, wise as well as strong, he is not so popular by half. Either the Higgledies, the Piggledies, or both combined, are sure to assail and besiege him, while he has no support from any quarter, but from the good-for-nothing and shabby minority already mentioned, who, being capable of industry (the greatest vice in a citizen), are equally prone, of course, to be loyal, which

in Higgledy-Piggledy is considered the greatest vice in a subject.

"The state of education in the island is one of transition, and measures are now in progress, which threaten the best interests of Ignorance with ruin, if the mind of the country is not awakened in time to so awful a danger. How great the danger is may be judged from the unquestionable truth that Higgledy-Piggledy educated would be Higgledy-Piggledy no longer. However, the sprightly feuds of the two races will probably prevent the poison from spreading with extravagant rapidity, so as to save the island from any thing like a deluge of enlightenment, or at least afford time for the construction of an ark.

"Nothing, indeed, can be more presumptuous than the attempt to instruct the Higgledy-Piggledidians, as if they did not, or could not, instruct themselves; the fact being that they have one of the completest systems of public instruction in the world.

"Of all things, no traveller should omit to visit their Polytechnic School. I found (when

I inspected it) a professor of mathematics teaching a great many curious things, which had bearings on other subjects as well as on algebra and geometry. He taught, for instance, that a crooked line is the shortest between two points; that enormous social virtue resides in *sixes* and *sevens;* that researches after *impossible* quantities is one of the noblest pursuits that a Piggledy or a Higgledy can engage in; that the most interesting spiral is the common cork-screw; but of all things, he took the greatest pains to explain and apply the principle of the inverted cone, which he contended was the very type of stability, naturally dwelling on it the most, as, in fact, it is the fundamental *idea* of the Higgledy-Piggledy constitution.

"Passing into the hall of Ethics, the chair of morality was filled by a learned doctor, who was just then developing some curious views on the subject of *meum* and *tuum*, to which he stated that he had been led by analytical reasoning from the religious institutions of the island. 'Assuming,' he said, 'our great

conical temple (with the renown of which the whole earth is filled) to be in reality, as it is professedly, a moral and religious fabric, it follows that the endowments it possesses cannot have had any origin but a strictly moral one ; now that those endowments were forcibly taken by the Higgledies from the Piggledies, merely because the former were stronger at the time, and had a fancy for the pious property of their neighbours, is beyond controversy. It, therefore, cannot be immoral (he argued), in any case, to deprive people forcibly (nor, of course, fraudulently) of any thing they possess that you happen to covet, for if such an action were criminal at all, it could not but be criminal in the highest degree in a case where religious uses are in question, for there it would not be a simple robbery, but one aggravated by the profane dedication of the spoil to heaven.' It was impossible not to be forcibly struck by a train of reasoning, which sent away a large ethical class thoroughly convinced that the immorality of rifling a pocket was nothing more heinous

than the process by which the great inverted cone came by its property.

"The school of oratory is held at the fish-market. Indeed, whatever little encouragement the exhaustless fisheries of the island receive is to be attributed to the immemorial connexion between dealing in fish and dealing in foul language. The very professors of rhetoric at Hubbub and other places are fish-wives. One of them has reduced the art of scolding to a system, and given it to the world in a treatise called 'The New De Oratore.' I was formally introduced to this lady, and picked up some curious information from her. Amongst other things she told me that the word *harangue* was derived from the French *hareng*, a herring; and that it was not for the purpose of shouting with pebbles in his mouth, that Demosthenes was accustomed to frequent the beach, but to invigorate and enrich his style by listening to the invectives of the *poissardes* of Athens. For the same reason, she added, eloquence had always flourished most in maritime states, and

most of all in islands ; witness Rhodes in ancient times (where the Romans sent their sons for those advantages of marine instruction which the inland position of the imperial city did not afford); and in the present day, Higgledy-Piggledy itself, where orators so abound, that the only difficulty is to find a man who is not one.

"Passing through an obscure quarter of the city, after leaving the fish-market, I was surprised to observe a modest building dedicated (as an inscription announced) to Industry and Independence. It proved to be a sort of academical institution. Curious to hear how far a lecturer would presume to go upon subjects so distasteful to the bulk of the community, I entered, and opening the door of a chamber where I was told the business of the school was going on, saw a professor delivering from his chair a most elaborate and interesting—*soliloquy*. Pleased at having at length an auditor, if not an auditory, he was proceeding with considerable increase of animation, when the shouts of an infuriated mul-

titude were heard distinctly, and in a few moments the institute was beleaguered by a rabble of Piggledies, hot from Balderdash Hall, who with furious noises and gestures expressed their resolution to pull the edifice down, and tear the unfortunate professor of industry piece-meal. How I escaped I never distinctly understood, but the lecturer was not so lucky, for he fell into the hands of the mob. In vain he protested that he was only a *professor*,—that he had never *practised* what he taught,—that in his heart he despised both industry and independence as much as any man could do, and that as to his lectures, it was impossible they could do much mischief, inasmuch as he had uniformly delivered them to empty benches. The crowd was not to be appeased ; a variety of frightful deaths was proposed, and I learned afterwards that he only escaped ending his days in some appalling way by the humane suggestion of one of the bystanders, who cried out that the fellow was a madman, and that a whip and a straight-waistcoat were the proper treatment for him.

"Going some while afterwards to visit one of the hospitals for lunatics in Topsiturvia, I saw my poor professor there, amongst the other maniacs and idiots. This lunatic institution is one of the greatest curiosities in the country, for all those things which elsewhere in the world are looked on as the characteristics of a sound mind, are regarded in Higgledy-Piggledy as evidences of an incurably disordered one. In the next cell to the frantic professor of industrial philosophy was an insane political economist, who had protested against a project for the exclusive use of Higgledy-Piggledy manufactures. 'When Higgledy-Piggledy cloth is as good and as cheap as the cloth of other countries,'—this was his argument—'it will be time enough to buy a coat of it.' The doctrine procured the poor wretch a Higgledy-Piggledy waistcoat, which, however, was not so tight but that he managed to amuse himself, in the usual manner of Tom-o'-Bedlams, by scribbling the walls of his cell with a bit of coal, an employment at which I found him busily engaged; and being curious to see

what the scrawl was, I examined it, and found it consisted of scraps from authors as mad as himself, named Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo. In the next cell was a crazy agriculturist, who had announced the doctrine of rotation of crops, and drivelled upon draining, until at length a commission of lunacy was issued against him. The keepers would allow him nothing but potatoes, but I threw him a few Swedish turnips, which seemed for the time to make him very happy, and he 'babbled of green' *crops* as long as I remained near him. The next wretched being that I met with seemed so profoundly melancholy, that I could not refrain from asking him what folly he had committed to bring him into such dismal company.

"'I denied,' replied the idiot, 'that the Piggledies were the finest peasantry in the world,—I said that they had their faults, like other people.'

"'But you do not say so still?' I asked him in a tone of profound commiseration.

"He mumbled a reply in the affirmative

and turned mopingly away to confer with the mad agriculturist, who charitably shared his turnips with him. 'Them's a pair of the incurables,' growled the keeper, a tall, savage Topsiturvian, who then took me into a ward where I saw a variety of singular cases, including one of a grocer, who insisted on placing his sugar-loaves on the broad end, to keep them from falling, and an astronomer who adhered to the Copernican system, in opposition to the received opinion of the island that the sun goes round the earth, and the earth round the moon, a celestial arrangement which would certainly be in perfect accordance with the institutions of Higgledy-Piggledy.

"Shocked and distressed at those sad spectacles of mental imbecility, I left the asylum with much more satisfaction than I entered it. It was such a comfort to be with the sane people once more.

"Amongst them I observed a waggoner yoking his cart before his horse;—several farmers were shearing their pigs, and great

was the cry and little the wool, as usual;—a Piggledy ostler was carefully locking a stable-door, while a Piggledy thief was riding off with the horse;—some industrious old women were making silk purses out of sows' ears;—a wife was burning her candle at both ends;—Old Piggledy was throwing the house out of the windows, and Young Piggledy was flinging his loaf into the kennel, and scampering after a rainbow. Failing to catch the airy glory, the boy commenced bawling lustily, and fell into a fury of childish passion, whereupon his mother, instead of correcting, appeased him by setting him to blow bubbles, the only use made of soap and water by the great majority of these fantastic islanders.

"The natural history of this country is well worth attention. Its zoology is rich and curious. The sloth there attains a gigantic size, and, notwithstanding its habits of torpor, commits greater ravages than wolves and tigers in other countries. The common jackass abounds, chiefly in the precincts of the cities and the neighbourhood of Balderdash

Hall, where it is not easy to distinguish its braying from that of the politicians and economists. There are wolves in sheeps' clothing to be met with in many parts, and it is odd that bears are not more numerous, for the island has the strongest possible resemblance to a bear-garden.

"Amongst birds, the wild goose is prominent. The chase of it constitutes one of the favourite amusements of all classes. There are numerous owls, too; and the Higgledy grandees provide ruins liberally for them, by expelling the poor Higgledies, and demolishing their habitations. But the bird that is most plentiful is the gull, and though the kites and cormorants devour them in great quantities, they seem never reduced in number.* The insect and reptile tribes swarm; the working-bee is indeed rare, and one species of flea is also deficient—namely, the industrious variety.

"Fish is extremely plentiful, and not more

* In Latin, the *larus communis*. It is observable that Larry (evidently from *larus*) is one of the commonest names amongst the Piggledies.

plentiful than excellent; so much so, that it is universally abjured by the people as an article of food. They will perish of hunger sooner than eat fish, and, to strengthen this aversion, their priesthood enjoins the eating of fish as a religious penance. You may conceive how light the yoke of a religion is where the mortifications are to dine on turbot and John Dorys; but there is no end to the eccentricities and comicalities of this strange people.

"Higgledy-Piggledy is the country for meteors. The chief employment of its natives is running through their bogs after Will o' the Wisp, Jack o' the Lantern, and other *ignes fatui*.

"Vegetation flourishes. The country would be a garden, only that the taste of the people is for wildernesses. A richer field to go *simpling* in does not exist in the world. In Topsiturvia, and most parts of Funstir and Donaught, the herbs that flourish most are wormwood, rag-weed, monk's-hood, and the wild variety of Justice, generally found in the

crops of hemp. But the same districts are also fertile in numerous other plants, such as docks, nettles, tares, brambles, considered weeds in most countries, but by the Piggledies cultivated with almost as much attention as is elsewhere bestowed upon the gifts of Ceres. There are but few bays and laurels in the island, and those few are but little cultivated. The soil seems totally unfit for the olive; attempts have been made to domesticate it, but hitherto without success.

Higgledy-Piggledy has produced some great men, but it is not the delight of that singular island to erect statues to Genius, or monuments to Public Virtue. In revenge, however, they honour *Little Men* exceedingly. In some parts are to be seen colossal statues of Mediocrity, and the Temple of Faction *there* corresponds with the temples raised in other nations to Fame and Public Spirit. Literature is of no account whatever. Men of letters are as much despised at Hubbub, as they are honoured and courted in other capitals.

"The national music is the Hurdy-Gurdy. That instrument is sculptured on their coins, and its melody is supposed to inspire the population with that national *Higgledy-Piggledy spirit* to which they are, no doubt, as much indebted for their wild institutions, as England is to the spirit of liberty for her tame ones.

"Sore puzzled is the chronicler of this bizarre commonwealth to determine what is most curious in such a profusion of natural and artificial curiosities. Upon the whole, I am disposed to admire nothing more than the little eating that satisfies the bulk of the inhabitants. They are as indifferent to the loaves as they are to the fishes, and content themselves (as we have seen) with a few roots, requiring little culture, and constituting a not more wretched than precarious subsistence for the people. The art of cooking is not much more known and practised than the art of embroidering or sculpture. Yet, to crown all, there is a state kitchen, kept up at prodigious cost, with cooks and arch-cooks, not only to the unspeakable

comfort of the Higgledies, who are amazing gourmands, as well as passionately fond of ruling the roast, but (what would be incredible, if related of any other nation in the world) apparently to the no less contentment of the Piggledies, who have not so much as a bone to pick, or even the crumbs that fall from the State table."

END OF VOL I.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

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